

A SAILOR IN SPITE OF HIMSELF



By HARRY CASTLEMON

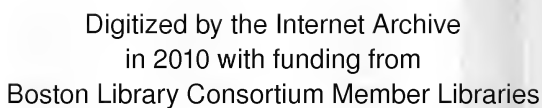
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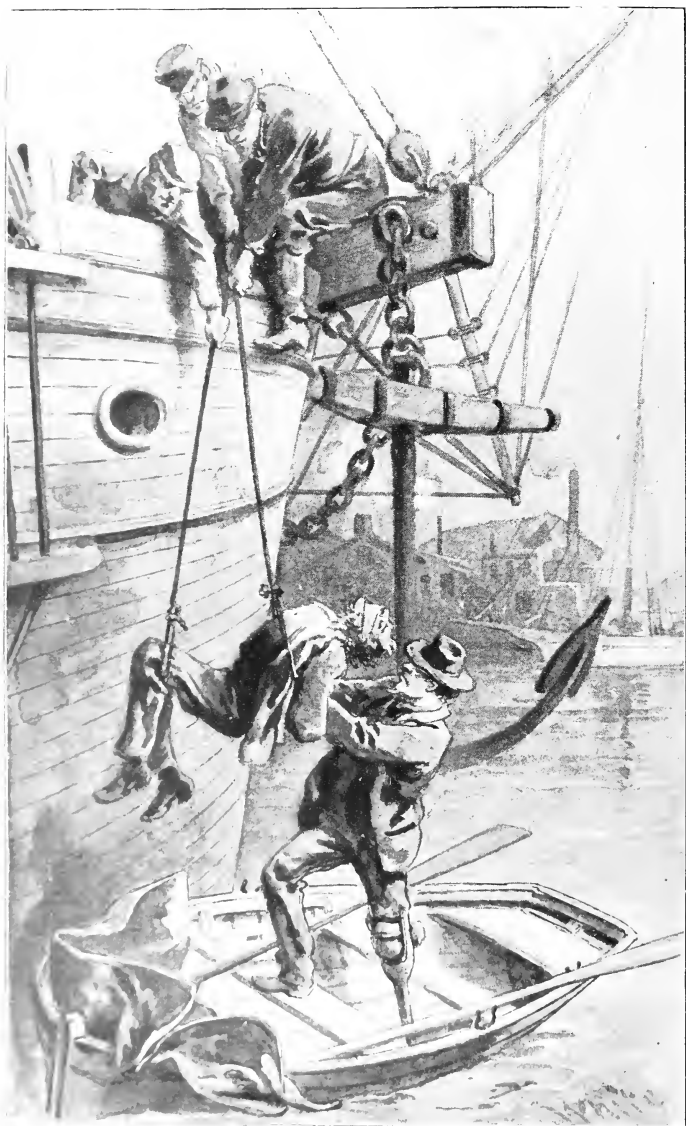
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A SAILOR IN SPITE OF HIMSELF

BY

HARRY CASTLEMON

AUTHOR OF "THE GUNBOAT SERIES," "THE ROD AND GUN SERIES,"
"THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN SERIES," ETC.

PHILADELPHIA

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A SAILOR IN SPITE OF HIMSELF.

CHAPTER I.

SIMPSON TELLS A SECRET.

“**H**ALLOO, Blues! What are you doing out here?”

“What are you Whites doing out here?”

“We came out to see you beaten.”

“You did? Then we would advise you to pull ashore immediately, for that is something you will not see this day.”

“Won’t we, indeed? You’ll soon tell a different tale. In less than an hour you will pull off those blue rosettes and throw them overboard.”

“On the contrary, in less than an hour the boys who wear those blue rosettes will be cheering the champions of the State.”

“Ha! Tell that to the marines. Perhaps they will believe it.”

This conversation took place between the occupants of two little sailboats, the Sunbeam and the Firefly, which had been thrown up into the wind and now lay almost motionless side by side, while the boys who made up their passengers and crews lounged on the thwarts, fanning their flushed faces with their hats, and ever and anon turning their eyes toward the shore in an eager, expectant manner, as if they were waiting for something.

From the positions in which the little vessels lay, their crews had a good view of the bay for ten miles on every side, and the sight presented to their gaze was one worth going a long way to see. The water was dotted with small craft of every description—tugs, skiffs, single-oared shells and sailboats, the latter all flying the colors of the Lone Star Yacht Club, and the shore in front of the academy was lined with carriages and people. It was a gala day in Elmwood, and almost every man, woman and child for miles around had come in to witness an event that had been

the topic of conversation for weeks—a race between two of the best boat clubs in the State.

Elmwood was situated on an extensive bay which indented the coast of one of our Southern States. It was a wealthy and thriving place, and in spite of the fact that the war was only just over, it boasted of as fine an academy as could be found anywhere. There were two hundred students and more on the rolls, and although you could have picked out from the number any number of lazy, mischievous boys—such fellows intrude themselves everywhere—you could not have found one who did not love the school and all its surroundings. It was no wonder that the institution stood high in the estimation of both scholars and patrons, for the faculty were men who believed in making it a pleasant place for the boys under their charge. Innocent sports of every kind were not only tolerated but encouraged, the professors often taking part in them with as much eagerness as the boys themselves. Just now everything except aquatics was at a discount, and

this state of affairs had been brought about by accident.

Among the boys who spent all their spare time upon the bay were two crews who were looked up to by the rest of the students as authorities on all matters pertaining to boats and rowing. The head man of one of these crews was Gus Layton, and the owner and stroke of the other was Bob Nellis, his cousin. The former rowed in a shell called the *Mist*, while Bob and his men took their daily airings in a beautiful little craft called the *Zephyr*.

One evening, while the crew of the *Mist*, who called themselves the champions of Elmwood, were taking a pull on the bay to exercise their muscles and cool their brains after a long siege of study in the school-room, they fell in with Bob Nellis and his men, who were out for the same purpose, and of course a race ensued. The self-styled champions expected to walk away with their opponents very easily, but to their intense chagrin and the overwhelming astonishment of fifty or more students who stood on the shore watching the

contestants, the Zephyr went ahead rapidly, and rounded to in front of the academy the winner by more than a dozen lengths. Bob and his crew were so highly elated over the result of the race that they immediately challenged the crew of the Mist to a contest for the championship, which was promptly accepted, and this particular day had been set for the trial.

The excitement began to run high directly. The students at once declared themselves the adherents of one or the other of the rival clubs, and took to wearing rosettes on their jackets. Bob and his men wore a white uniform, and Gus and his men dressed in blue, and by looking at the rosettes a student wore one could tell which side he favored without asking any questions.

For weeks nothing but the race had been talked of. The enthusiasm of the students was so contagious that even their fathers, older brothers, and mothers and sisters became interested. The ladies, old and young, took to wearing rosettes, and manufactured them by the dozen, blue or white, as their fancy

and their preference dictated. Mr. Sprague, the father of one of the *Mist's* crew, purchased a beautiful pitcher and cup, both bearing suitable inscriptions, which were to be presented to the winning crew by the prettiest young lady in Elmwood, and so the young oarsmen had something besides the championship to work for.

The Blues were confident, as they had reason to be. The crew of the *Mist* handled their oars with a grace and skill that were surprising, and the way they made their light shell dance over the water, when once they settled fairly down to their work, frightened all the other academy boys, who allowed them to claim and boast of the championship without a single contest to prove their superiority. Bob and his men acknowledged that the odds were against them, and devoted every spare moment to preparations for the race. Jack Phillips, the coxswain of the *Zephyr*, measured off a two-mile course at the upper end of the bay, and twice each day his crew pulled over it in a heavy yawl. They swung Indian clubs and dumb-bells to harden their

muscles, ran long races over the road to increase their powers of endurance, and all this while attended regularly to their school duties and kept pace with their classes. They were the favorites among the students by long odds, as any one could have told by counting the rosettes, and it was whispered about among the students that if all the crew of the Mist were like Gus Layton, its owner, there wouldn't have been a blue rosette to be seen. He was the most unpopular boy in school—so very unpopular, indeed, that any of the Blues, when asked why they wore his colors, felt called upon to explain that it was not on his account, but for the sake of Sprague, Haight and Bright, other members of his crew, whom everybody acknowledged to be good fellows. No one, not even his particular crony, said that Gus was a good fellow, and the reason for this will be seen as our story progresses.

“I say, Johnny,” exclaimed Tom Thayer, continuing the conversation which we have so unceremoniously interrupted, “you don't want to see Bob Nellis beaten. Let me pull

off that blue rosette and give you another that will correctly express your feelings."

Tom Thayer wore a white rosette and held the helm of the Sunbeam, while Johnny Parker wore a blue and was seated at the helm of the Firefly.

"I have no sympathy for Gus, that's a fact," said Johnny, raising his arm to shield the colors that were pinned to his breast. "But there's Sprague, you know; he is my chum."

"I am aware of it," replied Tom; "but with all due respect to you and him, I must say that he is keeping very bad company. He deserves to be beaten."

Johnny had no reply to make to this. It had long been a matter of wonder and discussion among the students that so good a fellow as Sprague should associate with such a scamp as Gus Layton, and as Johnny did not know what to say in defense of his friend's conduct, he brought the Firefly before the wind and filled away for the opposite side of the bay.

"I say, fellows," continued Tom, as soon as

the very light wind that was blowing had carried the Firefly a hundred yards or so away, "did you notice how Simpson acted?"

"I was just about to ask the same question," said one of Tom's passengers. "He is almost bursting with some secret or other. Let's call him back and find out what it is. Isn't it strange how that fellow gets hold of every bit of news that's floating about?"

The boy referred to was seated in the Firefly with Johnny Parker. Next to Gus Layton he was the most unpopular boy in school, and the reason was, because he was an incorrigible tale-bearer. His tongue was so unruly that he never could keep a secret, no matter how damaging it might be to others, or even to himself. This unfortunate habit had got him into numberless scrapes, but he never seemed to learn wisdom by his rough experience.

While the conversation we have recorded was being held, Simpson kept twisting about on his seat, smiling and winking at his companions in a way that would have excited the astonishment and mirth of a stranger, but

which told the boys present as plainly as words that he knew something which he could hardly keep from telling. By the time the two boats separated his secret had so swelled within him that he could contain it no longer.

"The Whites seem confident," said he, and as he spoke his companions, who had been lounging about the boat in various attitudes, started up quickly to hear what was coming, "but I will bet the contents of the next box I receive from home that the Blues beat them. I'll even bet that the Zephyr is not rowed over two hundred yards of the course," he added, with a knowing shake of his head.

"You will?" exclaimed Johnny.

"Yes, sir. I suppose we are all friends. We all wear the same colors."

"Speak out, Simp," exclaimed one of Johnny's passengers. "You know you can't keep it any longer."

"And it is a wonder he has kept it as long as he has," said another.

"I think I have held my tongue pretty still since you fellows poured that bucket of

water over me for telling the professors who it was that knocked the pickets off the fence," replied Simpson. "But I will tell you this, for it is much too good to keep. Bob's oar is cut half in two."

As Simpson said this he leaned back on his elbow in the stern-sheets and looked from one to the other of his companions to see what they thought about it. To say that they were astonished would not half express it. True they had heard of numerous plots, in all of which Simpson was implicated, to injure the *Zephyr* so that she could not be pulled in the race, but the boat and everything belonging to her had been so closely watched that Bob and his friends were positive that no advantage had been taken of them.

"Yes, sir," repeated Simpson. "Bob's oar will break the very first time he lays out his strength on it."

"Did you cut it?" asked Johnny, as soon as he had recovered from his amazement.

"No, I didn't; but I know who did. It was Mr. Layton, Gus's father."

"Well, now, if that wasn't a pretty piece

of business for a man to engage in I wouldn't say so," cried Johnny, indignantly. "Simp, you and the crowd you run with are too contemptible for anything!"

"Oh, now, what's the matter with you?" whined that worthy. "I have a good notion not to tell you another word. Don't you want the Blues to win?"

"How did Mr. Layton get a chance to interfere in this business?" inquired Johnny, without answering Simpson's question. "He is a hundred miles from here."

"I know it, but he has interfered with it, all the same, no matter if he is a thousand. You see, Gus is afraid of Bob, and he never intended to run a fair race. His first idea was to knock a hole in the Zephyr, and we came pretty near carrying it out, too."

"*We?*" echoed Johnny. "Did you have a hand in it?"

"Of course I did. I watched at the window of the boat-house while Gus went in; but just as I handed him the axe, who should come prowling around but one of the professors, and we had to take to our heels. The

next morning Bob found the window of the boat-house open and the axe lying on the floor, and knowing in a moment that something had been going on he set a watch over the building, and we couldn't get near it afterward."

"Well, what has that got to do with the oar that was tampered with?" demanded Johnny, almost fiercely.

"Now I would just like to know what makes you so cross," whined Simpson. "I believe you want our fellows to get beaten."

"Never mind that. Tell me about the oar."

"Ain't I coming to it as fast as I can? The very morning that Bob found the axe in the boat-house he sprung a row-lock while he and his crew were practicing, and thinking he might as well have a new rig while he was about it, he sent to Clifton after another shell and a set of oars. Mr. Layton—he is Bob's uncle and guardian, you know—heard of it through Gus, and countermanded the order as far as the shell was concerned, but wrote to Bob that the oars should be forthcoming.

When they were done he wouldn't let the man who made them send them to Bob, but took them to his own house, removed the leather from Bob's oar—he could easily tell it from the rest, because Bob always has his oars made with a larger grip than the others—sawed it half in two, filled up the crack with putty or something, so that it could not be seen, and put the leather on again just as it was before. Then, instead of sending up the oars three or four days ago, as he promised to do, Mr. Layton kept them until the last moment, and they arrived only an hour or two ago, so that Bob had no chance to examine them or practice with them. Oh, his goose is cooked, I tell you, and the Blues are bound to win. Now, what is the matter with you fellows? You don't act as if you were glad at all."

It was easy enough to see that Johnny and his friends were anything but delighted at what they had heard. If one might judge by the expression on their faces they were very much disgusted.

CHAPTER II.

JOHNNY IS DISGUSTED.

“SIMP,” said Johnny, after trying in vain to find words strong enough to express his feelings, “I’ve a good notion to duck you in the bay for not telling of this before. Get out of my boat!”

“Oh, now, I can’t get out and walk ashore, can I?” whined Simpson.

“That’s so; but I can soon put you ashore; and, Simp, don’t you ever speak to me as long as you remain at this academy.”

“I would like to know what is the matter with you fellows,” demanded the culprit, greatly astonished and utterly at a loss to account for so much feeling on Johnny’s part. “I am sure I did nothing but what you would have done if you had been in my place.”

In his opinion, anything that helped to insure the defeat of a rival was perfectly fair

and honorable. He had expected that Johnny and his friends, after listening to his revelation, would be all enthusiasm and admiration for the shrewdness Gus had exhibited in getting to windward of his opponent, but instead of that they all appeared to be very indignant, and Johnny had expressed a desire to throw him overboard. He could not understand it.

"I don't believe you want our fellows to win," repeated Simpson.

"Yes I do, if they can win honorably. But I'll tell you what is a fact: Gus Layton shall not have that silver pitcher. I will blow the whole thing, and in the presence of all the spectators, too."

"Oh, don't do that!" gasped Simpson, almost paralyzed at the thought. "I wouldn't have my name mixed up with this business for anything. Gus would half kill me if he knew what I have told you."

"Don't let that distress you," replied Johnny. "From this time forward no one shall ever hear your name pronounced by me. I shall take no more notice of you and the

rest who have a hand in this mean business than if you did not exist."

"I say," suddenly exclaimed one of Johnny's companions, all of whom had listened in silence to this conversation, "Sprague would never row in that boat if he knew what has been going on."

"That's a fact," exclaimed Johnny, an idea striking him. "Let's go over there and stop the whole thing."

"Oh, it is of no use; you can't do it," drawled Simpson. "There they come now."

Five o'clock, the time set for the race, had arrived, and those of the spectators who had come out in boats to obtain a fair view of the contest were beginning to grow restless, and to cast frequent and impatient glances toward the academy grounds. Even as Simpson spoke there was a commotion among the crowd gathered about one of the boat-houses on the beach, the door flew open, and a light shell, propelled by four boys dressed in blue, darted out and moved rapidly up the bay toward the starting-point. It was the Mist. The Blues were on the alert, and the moment their

favorites came in sight they were greeted with a clapping of hands, waving of handkerchiefs and prolonged cheers.

While the *Mist* was taking her position alongside the tug where stood one of the professors who was to act as starter, her rival, the *Zephyr*, came in sight, her crew pulling a long, sweeping stroke, and feathering their oars as neatly as old men-of-war men selected to row the captain's gig. Then another and louder uproar arose among the spectators, and continued until the *Zephyr* came up alongside the *Mist* and the starter stepped into view. While he was getting the boats into position, and giving the crews their final instructions, we will glance rapidly at some scraps of the history of two of the contestants who have an important part to play in our story.

First in meanness, treachery, and almost everything else that is bad, comes Gus Layton, and so we will devote our attention to him. He is, as we have said, Bob's own cousin, a fact that has given rise to much doubtful speculation in the minds of the students, for they do not see how two boys, so

widely different in dispositions, tastes and habits, can possibly be connected by ties of blood. He is a cross, sullen-looking boy, with a hooked nose, a low, retreating forehead, and an oily, insinuating manner, which, while it draws some toward him, repels a great many more. He is too lazy to study, and consequently, although he is sixteen years of age, he is in one of the lowest classes in school. He pulls a good oar, is a passable gymnast and ball-player, shows a wonderful faculty for shirking hard work, displays cunning in getting himself out of the numerous scrapes he falls into, and these are about all the accomplishments he possesses.

During the lifetime of Mr. Nellis, Bob's father, Gus had been a sort of protégé of that gentleman, who bestowed on him more care and attention than his own father did. By placing him at the academy Mr. Nellis gave him every advantage for fitting himself for usefulness in after life; and, more than that, he took care to neglect nothing which he thought would add to his comfort and pleasure. Was Bob presented with a new shell, a

sailboat, a uniform, or a supply of pocket-money, the same boat which brought them to Elmwood brought a like supply for Gus Layton. Was Bob sent off during the long summer vacation to ramble among the hills of New England, or to fish in the trout streams of the Adirondacks, Gus was never compelled to remain behind. One would suppose that under such circumstances Gus would have been a happy boy, and that he would have felt grateful to the uncle, and that, if he had no affection for his cousin, he would at least have treated him civilly in return for his father's kindness and liberality; but such was not the case. His jealousy made him morose, cross and fretful, and he despised and hated his cousin from the bottom of his heart.

And was this feeling reciprocated by Bob? Not at all. Although, to quote from the students, he did not take much stock in his cousin, he always treated him kindly, and was as cordial and friendly with him as Gus would permit him to be.

Bob's father, even after the war, was looked upon as the wealthiest man in Clifton; but

since his death, which occurred a few months previous to the beginning of our story, it had been whispered about that he had but little property, and that little had been willed to his brother-in-law, Mr. Layton, no provision having been made for Bob, who was left as his uncle's ward. Many who had refused to believe this story at first were beginning to put some faith in it now, for Mr. Layton's refusal to allow Bob to purchase a new shell—a thing his father never would have done—and the advice he had of late so often given him that it was high time he was paying less attention to his boating and more to his studies, as he might at no distant day be obliged to earn his bread before he could eat it, made it evident that there was some foundation for the reports that had got abroad. Bob did not know what to make of the situation, and was only waiting for the close of the school year to have a plain talk with his uncle. He wanted to know just where he stood.

Bob Nellis, the owner and stroke of the *Zephyr*, was a splendid fellow in every respect. Every one said so except Gus Layton

and his set. They did not like him, and the reason was because they were jealous of him. He always stood among the first five in his class, and in athletic sports, in which Gus was particularly anxious to excel, Bob was as far ahead of him as he was in his studies. But Bob had been a changed boy of late. He was almost as gloomy as Gus himself. His mother died when he was too young to remember her, and now that his father was gone he was alone in the world. Besides his uncle he had not a relative to whom he could go for advice or assistance, and to apply to him for either he had already made up his mind was quite out of the question. The students all sympathized with Bob in his troubles, and this was another thing that aroused the ire of Gus Layton, who declared he could not see what there was in that pauper to draw the fellows to him. This much to introduce our two principal characters, and to show how they stand with regard to each other and to the world.

While the rival crews were taking their stations and listening to their final instruc-

tions, the Firefly, with Johnny Parker at the helm, was making as good use of her time as she possibly could with the very light breeze that was blowing, and presently ran her bow upon the beach.

"Now, Simp, make yourself scarce about here, and remember that henceforth I want to see and hear as little of you as possible," said Johnny, jumping out and running up the bank, waving his handkerchief above his head as he went. "A boy who knows all that you do, and who goes until this late day without telling it to anybody, I have no use for."

"Oh, now, he's going to blow on me!" whined Simpson, his face growing white with alarm. "Come back here, Johnny. Just consider what a mess you will get me into. Call him back, boys!"

"Just consider what a mess Sprague will be in if he rows in that race," replied Johnny, plunging recklessly into the crowd.

The spectators looked after him as he elbowed them right and left, and wondered if he had taken leave of his senses. Johnny was a lively runner for a little fellow, but he

had a good distance to go, and the crowd was so dense that he could scarcely work his way through it. Still he succeeded in attracting the attention of his friend Sprague, who, believing that Johnny was urging him to do his best to win the race, gave him a sign of recognition, and then he grasped his oar with a firmer hold, as if to show that he understood him.

While Johnny was yet too far off to make his words heard, he saw the eight rowers suddenly bend their bodies forward, hold their oars poised in the air for a moment, and then dip them so nearly together that they all seemed to strike the water at the same instant. Johnny was too late to stop the race. With a sigh of regret he worked his way out of the crowd, and seating himself upon an elevated part of the shore, where he was comparatively alone, he fixed his eyes upon the *Zephyr* and waited to see Bob's oar snap in his hand.

The two boats moved away together and for a few yards kept side by side; but it was only for a few yards, for Bob, who had set out to win, and could be satisfied with noth-

ing else than taking the lead at once and keeping it through to the end, put on a desperate spurt, in which he was faithfully backed by his crew, and in less time than it takes to tell it the Mist was behind, and falling further behind every moment. But why did not Bob's oar break? He was rowing with more vigor and determination than Johnny had ever seen him exhibit before, and although the tough piece of wood he held in his hand bent like a whipstock, it never cracked. Surely no oar that had been cut half in two could stand any such outlay of strength. Johnny was completely bewildered, and so were a score of other students, all Gus Layton's friends, who were waiting with a good deal of anxiety and impatience for the catastrophe which Johnny so much dreaded. There was still another who was interested in the matter, and who was just then learning something about it Johnny would have been delighted to know. It was Simpson.

That young gentleman thought from the expression on Johnny's face that he had better take him at his word and make himself

scarce about there. Filled with apprehension, and wondering what would become of him if Johnny succeeded in stopping the race, he sprang ashore, ran up the bank, and stationed himself where he could see all that passed. When he saw the boats start off in spite of Johnny's frantic signals he drew a long breath and once more turned his face toward the beach, intending to be on hand to hear what Bob had to say about his broken oar when he came back. In order to avoid the crowd he was obliged to pass close to the academy building, and as he was hurrying along he heard his name pronounced in low and cautious tones. Looking up, he saw one of Gus Layton's right-hand men, Scotty, (quite as often called Friday, for the reason that Gus always looked to him to do any work that he did not feel inclined to do himself), who was leaning half-way out of a third-story window, beckoning eagerly, and at the same time taking care to be seen by no one but the boy below.

"Oh, Simp, don't say a word, but come up here directly," whispered Scotty, in great

excitement. "It is all out, and there's bound to be an awful row when the boats get back."

"No!" exclaimed Simpson.

"But I say yes. Some fellow has let the cat out of the bag, and if Gus doesn't have a fight on his hands before he goes to bed I am no prophet. Nellis is just red-hot and still heating."

"Does he—does he know who—" stammered Simpson.

"Yes, he knows all about it. Come up here."

If Johnny Parker had heard this he might have known how to account for Bob's extra strong pulling.

CHAPTER III.

SCOTTY'S PLAN AND HOW IT ENDED.

“**I** SAY, Simp,” continued Scotty, in the same cautious whisper, “don’t you hear me? Come up here. We must get Gus out of this scrape, if there is any way to do it.”

Simpson thought no more about the boat-race. Trembling for fear of the exposure that was coming, and the investigation that would be sure to follow close upon the heels of it, in which his name would bear a prominent part, he darted into the building and hurried up the stairs to his dormitory. At the door he met Scotty, whose usually stolid face was all aglow with excitement and triumph. A brilliant thought had just occurred to him.

“Simp,” he hurriedly exclaimed, “the only way to get Gus out of this trouble is to destroy the evidence against him.”

“What evidence is there?” asked Simpson.

“Why the oar itself—the one Mr. Layton cut for him. You see,” added Scotty, so eager to get through with what he had to say that he could scarcely speak plainly, “about half an hour ago, as I was going through the hall, who should come in but Bob Nellis and three or four of his particular friends. Bob carried an oar in his hand, and I saw that it was one of the new ones he had just received, and that the leather had been removed. If I needed any other evidence to convince me that he knew just what had been going on I should have had it in the look his face wore and the words he uttered. I heard him say, as he went up the stairs, ‘There’s not another boy in school who would have put up with that Gus Layton’s meanness as long as I have, and I’m not going to do it any longer. If anything about our boat breaks during the race to-day I shall believe it is because he has tampered with it in spite of our watchfulness, and I shall come back here and expose him in the presence of the professors and of the students.’”

"Well?" said Simpson, when Scotty paused to take breath.

"Well, they went up to their dormitory, and presently I heard a door slammed and locked. They have hidden the oar in their closet; and I propose that, if we can get at it, we take it out and hide it somewhere else. Then we'll watch our chance and tell Gus of what we have done, and suggest to him that if there is any row raised all he has to do is to deny the whole business, for there is no evidence against him—eh?"

"But Gus can't keep a secret, you know," said Simpson, unconsciously making use of almost the very words that one of Johnny's friends had addressed to himself, "and perhaps he has told some of the fellows that his father cut the oar."

"I know he has. He has told you and me and all the rest of his friends; but we will not blow on him."

"I—ah—that is—oh, no, of course not," stammered Simpson, his heart fairly coming up into his mouth when he reflected that he had already committed the secret to half a

score of boys who would not countenance any such trickery as this which Gus and his father had been guilty of.

"See here, Simp," said Scotty, looking suspiciously at his friend, "that doesn't come from the heart. Are you White?"

"Not much. I am so Blue it will rub off."

"Then you had better do something to prove it. You must help me get that oar. I have tried all my keys, but none of them will fit the lock. Here's something, however, that will open the way for us," said Scotty, producing from under his jacket a large chisel which he had abstracted from the carpenter's chest. "If you are Blue clear through, as you say you are, take this and burst open the door."

Simpson, eager to prove himself true to his colors, replied by seizing the chisel and running out into the hall, Scotty following close at his heels. A few rapid steps carried them up the stairs to Bob's dormitory, and a few more to the closet in which the telltale oar was hidden. Here Simpson's courage began

to fail him, and he felt the strongest desire to back out.

"What will the professors say, I wonder?" said he, making a feeble attempt to force an entrance into the closet.

"We don't care what they say. They'll never find out who did it, for I ain't a-going to tell, I bet you. You will be more likely to tell yourself."

"You don't give me credit for much sense, do you?" said Simpson.

"Well, you have done such things before now, haven't you? That is no way to get in there. Cut the casing around the bolt."

The casing, which was a thin pine board, could not long resist their efforts. A few blows with the chisel brought off a piece of it, and then the lock was no longer an obstacle to them. As the door flew open Scotty seized the oar and hurried away with it, while Simpson, anxious to conceal his work as long as possible, lingered to shut the closet and press the piece of casing he had cut off back into its place. As all the students, and every one else belonging to the academy, were out

watching the race, the young scapegraces had the building to themselves and were in no danger of being discovered. They ran quickly down the back stairs and into the carpenter's shop, where the oar was speedily hidden away under a pile of boards.

"It will stay there until doomsday," said Scotty, "for these boards are seldom disturbed."

"Yes," said Simpson, "but I can propose something better for it. Some night, as soon as it becomes dark, I'll take it out and sink it in the bay. Then I would like to see anybody find it."

"That's sensible, although these boards have never been disturbed since I have been to this school. Now, the next thing is to run down to the beach and whisper a word of warning in Gus Layton's ear. Are you up to it?"

"Yes, sir; of course I am."

Scotty and his friend worked to such good advantage that they had plenty of time to do all this, which we have been so long in describing, and to run out on the bank in season

to witness the conclusion of the race. They left the shop by different doors, and when they came within sight of the bay saw that the Zephyr had already turned the stakeboat and was well on her way home, while the Mist was so far behind that it was quite impossible for her to make up her lost ground. Bob and his men were still pulling with all the power of which they were capable, saying by their actions as plainly as they could have said it in words that in defeating those who would have beaten them by fraud they were taking all the revenge they desired. Presently Simpson found himself standing near a group of students whom he knew to be Blues, but who, he was surprised to see, had discarded their favorite colors. The subject of Gus Layton's underhanded dealings was being discussed by them in an animated manner. Indeed it had somehow got abroad among the students, and was the only topic of conversation.

"I declare it is a downright shame!" exclaimed Claxton, one of the group, "and it is a great pity it was not known before the race began. If I were Nellis I would make the

school too hot for Gus Layton. He's got proof enough against him."

"Ah! but has he, though?" cried Simpson.
"Where is it?"

"The oar, my dear fellow—the oar that was cut by Gus Layton's orders. Have you seen anything of it?"

"But perhaps Bob doesn't know where it is."

"Why, he took it into the academy and locked it up."

"I don't suppose it could have been spirited out of that lock-up and hidden somewhere else, could it?" said Simpson, with a look that spoke volumes. "Always be sure of your evidence before you hang a man."

The students were amazed. They looked at each other and at Simpson for a few seconds without speaking, and then the one who had thus far acted as spokesman said, coaxingly:

"Now, Simp, tell us all about it; there's a good fellow. Somehow you have a way of finding out everything that goes on within a mile of the academy. What has become of the oar? Where is it hidden?"

"It is in the carpenter's loft, concealed under a pile of boards," answered Simpson, speaking before he thought. "I declare," he added, mentally, and growing frightened at what he had done, "I have told it, just as Scotty said I would. I say, fellows," he continued, trying to recover himself, "you don't suppose I am green enough to tell every thing I know, do you?"

The cheers, long and loud, which arose at this moment, as the *Zephyr* flew by the tug on which the judges were standing, put a stop to the effort Simpson was about to make to repair the damage he believed he had done. He was borne with the crowd toward the beach, and joined with it in so heartily applauding the victors that his friend Scotty, had he been there, might have thought he had good reason for believing that he was not as Blue as he professed. Slowly the defeated crew pulled down the home-stretch, and the feeble attempt to cheer them as they passed the judges' stand did not serve as a balm to their wounded feelings. Gus was so filled with rage and jealousy that he could scarcely

see what was going on around him. He sent his shell into the boat-house so swiftly that, in spite of the efforts of the coxswain and the rest of the crew, she received injuries which placed her far out of the lists forever, so far as racing was concerned. Hastily dressing himself, he left the boat-house without saying a word to any of his companions. He knew the cause of his defeat. Bob had been warned by somebody, and instead of using the new oars his uncle had sent him he had rowed the race with others which had, on more than one occasion, proved perfectly trustworthy. But who was the traitor? Gus had asked himself this question more than a score of times during the race, and each time, as if in response to the inquiry, the image of a red-headed, cringing youth, with round shoulders and stooping gait, had risen before his mental vision. Gus hurried off to find the original of the image, and was not long about it, for the youth in question was impatient to find him. Gus met him hurrying down the bank toward the boat-house, full of news, which he was eager to communicate.

"Simp," said he, taking the red-headed youth by the lapel of his coat, "a word in your private ear."

He looked all around to make sure that there was no one within hearing, and then fastened his eyes sternly upon the face of the boy before him.

"Simp," said Gus, "did you ever read the fable of a man who found a torpid adder, or some other kind of a serpent, and took it home with him and warmed it, and after he had restored it to life the serpent turned on him and bit him?"

"Oh, now, that doesn't apply to me," said Simpson, fairly shaking in his boots.

"I have been good to you, haven't I?"

"Yes, you have."

"I took you in hand and made friends for you when none of the other fellows would have anything to do with you, because of that tongue of yours—didn't I?"

"Yes, you did."

"Simp, there's a traitor about here somewhere, and I am looking for him. If I can find him I'll—I'll—"

"Well, you can just look farther," whined Simpson, growing more and more alarmed, for he had never seen Gus so utterly overcome with rage as he was at that moment. "You don't see any traitor in me, I can tell you."

"I took you into my confidence and told you that Bob's oar would not hang together while he was pulling two hundred yards, didn't I? Now, did you ever repeat that to anybody?"

"I never did," declared Simpson, as if he were perfectly horrified at the thought. "As sure as I live and breathe, I never whispered it to a living soul!"

"Think again; it got out somehow."

"I don't care if it did; I didn't let it out, as sure as you're a foot high. If the fellows say anything to you about it, deny it and stick to it. Say that you are above all such meanness."

"What good will that do? Bob has got the oar."

"No, he hasn't. I saw him take it up to his dormitory and lock it up, and I went and got Scotty, and he and I stole it out and hid it where no one will ever think of looking

for it. I had to cut the door open to get it, too. I wouldn't have run so much risk if I had been a traitor to you, would I? I say again, if they accuse you of trying to win by fraud, deny it up hill and down. They can't bring any evidence against you."

Gus let go Simpson's collar, and stepping back a pace or two looked at him without speaking.

CHAPTER IV.

GUS HAS A BENEFIT.

GUS took a few moments in which to think over this extraordinary proposition. He was well aware that all the students had by this time heard of the meanness of which he had been guilty—if there chanced to be any who were ignorant of it they would not remain long so—and the idea of facing them and saving himself from disgrace by a bold denial was something that had never occurred to him. The audacity of the thing pleased him.

“I declare, Simp,” said he, at length, “two heads are better than one, if one is a red-head. I was afraid that the fellows would make things so uncomfortable for me that I would have to leave school; but I have a different opinion now. If Bob says anything about the oar I can say, you know, that he wants to

injure me, and ask him to produce his evidence."

"That's the very idea," assented Simpson.

"Don't lisp a word of what you have told me to anyone else," said Gus. "We mustn't let it get out."

"Ah! Trust me for that. Do you think I am a greenhorn?"

Gus, feeling as if a heavy weight had been removed from his shoulders, walked off snapping his fingers, and Simpson stood congratulating himself on his shrewdness—he never thought to give Scotty any credit for it—when, happening to cast his eye toward the academy, he saw a sight that filled him with great consternation.

A crowd of students were coming from the direction of the carpenter's shop, and the foremost of them, Claxton by name, who had acted as spokesman of the group he had met a short time before, carried over his shoulder the identical oar which had been stolen from the closet and so carefully hidden in the lumber-pile. Simpson knew it the instant he put his eyes on it. His under jaw dropped down,

and for a moment or two he stood staring at Claxton as if he could hardly make up his mind whether he was awake or dreaming. Then it flashed upon him again that he had done just what Scotty predicted he would do—revealed his complicity in an affair which, should it reach the ears of the faculty, would cause his expulsion from the academy.

“Simp,” said an angry voice close at his elbow.

The culprit turned and found Scotty at his side.

“Simp, look there!” said the latter, pointing toward the academy door through which Claxton was just disappearing with the oar. “What did I tell you? You’re not a greenhorn, are you?”

“Oh, now, Scotty, you just want to clear out,” exclaimed Simpson, who, when taken to task either by the professors or the students, always fell back on the line of defense he had suggested to Gus Layton. “I would like to know why you fellows always pounce upon me when anything goes wrong about the academy?”

"Simply because you know you are the guilty one, that's why. What induced you to tell Claxton where that oar was hidden?"

"I didn't tell him. I haven't spoken to him in a month," declared Simpson, earnestly.

"Then how did he find it out? I didn't tell him."

"I don't know how he found it out. Perhaps he was watching us when we hid the oar."

"That's highly probable," replied Scotty, with a sneer. "Good-bye, Simp; you'll not do to tie to. I have at last satisfied myself of that fact. I don't know what Layton will do to you."

Simpson didn't know, either, and that was what troubled him just then more than anything else. Believing it best to keep out of sight for a while, he made his way out of the academy grounds without being discovered and directed his course toward the village of Elmwood, which lay about a mile distant. Having no other way of passing the time he roamed about the streets until seven

o'clock, and then with great reluctance turned his face toward the academy. The buildings were closed at half-past seven, and all the students who were not in their dormitories at that hour were obliged to account for their absence to the professors the next morning.

As Simpson was passing the wharf he saw the little steamer which plied up and down the coast getting under way. The gang-plank had been hauled in, the lines cast off, and then, in obedience to some hurried orders, the plank was once more shoved out again and the steamer made fast to the wharf. At the same time a hack, driven at furious speed, came down the road from the direction of the academy, and it was in response to the shouts of the driver and the frantic signals of some one inside that the steamer had delayed her departure. Simpson had a good view of the passenger, who was leaning more than half-way out of the window flourishing his handkerchief, and his heart gave a great bound when he saw that it was Gus Layton. He watched him until he was safe on board the vessel, saw the porters take charge of his bag-

gage, and then hurried out of the village with a much lighter heart than he had brought into it.

“Thank goodness he is gone and I am safe!” said Simpson, to himself. “I do not know what the other fellows will do to me, but of one thing I am satisfied—they’ll not beat me.”

Yes, Gus was gone, and that, too, with the determination of never coming back. His departure had been hastened by something that transpired at the academy shortly after his interview with Simpson. He saw Claxton when he went into the building with the oar, and he noticed, too, that while the Whites still wore their colors, there was not a Blue rosette to be seen. Even Scotty’s impudence could not hold out in the face of public opinion so generally and forcibly expressed, and he had thrown aside his Blue rosette; and, furthermore, he seemed anxious to avoid Gus, for when he saw him coming he slipped around the building and out of sight.

“Rats desert a sinking ship,” said Gus, enraged at the conduct of his man Friday. “I

must be getting low down in the world when such fellows as Scotty go back on me."

As Gus entered the hall he saw Bob and his victorious crew surrounded by a crowd of students, who were congratulating them on their success, and among the most enthusiastic Gus was surprised to see three of his own men, Sprague, Haight and Bright. They seemed to have eyes and ears for no one but the members of the winning crew—there was not one of them who took the least notice of him. Gus knew the meaning of this, and it was more than he could stand. Hastily leaving the academy, he made the best of his way to the boat-house. Pausing a moment to look at the *Mist*, once his pride and delight, but which now lay in her dock shattered and half-filled with water, Gus passed into a little anteroom, in which the club held their meetings, and sat down to think over his troubles and determine upon some course of action. Scarcely was he seated when the door opened, admitting Sprague, Haight and Bright.

"Well, old fellow," said Sprague, throwing his leg over the table beside which Gus was

sitting, "here's a pretty kettle of fish. We're beaten out of sight, and come back to find all sorts of stories and resolutions afloat. The boys have sent you to coventry."

"I am aware of it," said Gus, bitterly. "I saw it very plainly when I was in the hall just now. I have some traitor to thank for this, and I only wish that I could find him. I would give him a lesson he would not soon forget."

"Do you really wish to know who it was that put Bob on his guard?"

"Of course I do!" exclaimed Gus, starting up in his chair. "If you will tell me who it was I will make him repent it in less than five minutes. Who was it?"

"Well, sir," said Sprague, folding his arms and looking Gus squarely in the eye, "I am the fellow! I would do the same thing again, under like circumstances."

Gus was so utterly confounded by this bold and unexpected declaration that he could neither move nor speak. He sat staring blankly at Sprague, hardly able to comprehend that he had heard aright. He showed

no inclination to carry out the threat he had just made, for Sprague was two years older than himself, and, furthermore, he had been through some tight places.

"Perhaps I ought to add a word by way of explanation," continued Sprague. "When you told us what your father had done by your request, we three fellows, who are now here, got together and talked the matter over. The only thing that kept us from withdrawing from your crew was the fact that we wanted this matter of the championship decided, and in order that it might be decided fairly we thought that some one had better speak to Bob, and I was the one selected to do it. I mentioned no names, but told him if he was wise he would carefully examine his shell and everything belonging to her before he took her out of the boat-house. I judge he did so, for he rowed the race with his old oars."

"And then you fellows played off on me and let him beat!" said Gus, angrily.

"No, we did not. We pulled our level best. The Zephyrs beat us, and they can

beat any crew that can be raised in this academy. Somehow, the part you and your father have played has become known, and there's no one who approves of it, unless it be some contemptible fellow like Simp or Scotty, who has no honor about him. Things look squally, Gus, and I tell you plainly that if you stop here you must make up your mind to swim in the hottest kind of water."

"But I'll not stay here!" cried Gus, suddenly jumping to his feet. "I'll be on my way home in less than an hour!"

Without saying another word to his companions Gus ran out of the boat-house. He hunted up the janitor and sent him for a carriage, and then, hurrying to his dormitory, began packing his wardrobe into his trunk. The news that he was getting ready to leave the academy quickly spread among the students, who, thinking it was a good time to show their opinion of him, went quietly to work to get up a "benefit" for him. Bob and Sprague and a few of the order-loving ones did all they could to prevent it; but seeing that the students were not to be turned

from their purpose, they withdrew to their rooms, so that they might not seem by their presence to countenance any such proceeding.

By the time the carriage arrived everything was arranged. When Gus descended the stairs he found the students drawn up four deep on each side of the hall, and so loud were the yells of derision, so deafening the tooting of tin horns and banging of tin pans when he made his appearance, that the horses attached to the hack took fright and Gus came very near being left behind. He did manage, however, to spring upon the steps just as the horses started off, and banging the door after him, he sank down into the farthest corner and stopped his ears with his hands.

"Bob is at the bottom of this," said he to himself when the noise had been left behind, "and if he don't suffer for it it will be because I can't make him. School will be out in a week, and by the time he gets home I will have everything fixed for him. The house his father once owned belongs to *my* father now, and Bob, while he stays there, shall be reminded of the fact a thousand times a day.

But he shall not stay there long. I'll get rid of him somehow. I'll send him so far on the other side of the world that he'll never find his way back again."

This was a plan that Gus had been revolving in his mind for months—ever since the death of Bob's father. He believed that when he had once seen the last of him his troubles would all be over. His cousin had never in his life injured him by word or deed. There was not a single act of his to which Gus could point that was in any way detrimental to him; and yet he hated him—hated him because he was so popular everywhere, especially at the academy; because it came as natural and easy to him as it does to an Indian to hate a white man. The starting-point of this hatred was a fierce quarrel which his father had with Mr. Nellis in the years gone by. It originated over some money which Mr. Nellis, who was at that time a sailor, had placed in the hands of his brother-in-law for safe-keeping. The money disappeared, and not only Mr. Nellis, but everyone else who knew anything of the circumstances, believed

that Mr. Layton had appropriated it to his own use.

In process of time Mr. Nellis left the sea and became a prosperous merchant in Clifton, his native village. When he retired from active business he made his brother-in-law his agent, and gave him full control of his affairs. He thought that the breach between them had been closed forever; but no one else thought so—not even Bob, who, boy as he was, believed that Mr. Layton was only awaiting a favorable opportunity to take a terrible revenge on his father. The sequel proved that he was right in this opinion, and that Mr. Layton had been secretly plotting for years to ruin his generous brother-in-law.

Gus, knowing how matters stood—for his father often conferred with him—took up the cudgel against Bob, as he believed himself in honor bound to do, and made his life as unpleasant for him as he could. Now he had a wider field for his operations. Mr. Nellis was out of the way, the property was all in his father's hands, and if Mr. Layton chose to say the word Bob had not where to lay his

head. Gus was resolved that his father should say that word, if he could by any means induce him to do so, and if not, he would say it himself, and back it up with actions so effectual that nobody should ever hear of Bob Nellis again. Gus thought of it all the way home, and by the time the spires of Clifton came in sight he had decided upon a plan of operations which promised to do the business for Bob in fine style.

CHAPTER V.

FATHER AND SON.

CLIFTON was a thriving little place, the centre of a rich farming region, and as all the cotton that was produced in the country for a circle of twenty miles around was shipped at its wharves, it could, at certain seasons of the year, boast of an amount of business that one would hardly expect of so small a town. It was the home of many wealthy gentlemen, and conspicuous among the noble mansions which adorned the hills south of the village stood that which had once been occupied by Mr. Nellis. It was situated in the midst of extensive grounds, away from the noise and bustle of the town, and there Bob was born, and there he had lived, surrounded by every comfort that affection could suggest and money supply. The hunting, too, was fine—so much so that the

neighboring planters came from far and near to enjoy it. During the season there was hardly a day passed but that some of the village hunters would be called upon to act as guides to some of those who were bound to fill their game-bags before they went home. A few miles farther out quails were abundant, and squirrel were so thick they were almost a nuisance. Wild turkeys and deer were often brought in, and finally it came about that one of the hunters who belonged in the village discovered something that worked a great change in his fortunes.

Towards home, his home it was now, Gus Layton hurriedly bent his steps as soon as the steamer touched the wharf, leaving his baggage, which he had given into the charge of a drayman, to follow more leisurely. As the ponderous iron gate clanged behind him he looked around with a smile of satisfaction. The last time he entered there he was dependent on the bounty of a man whom he despised; now he was master there, or his father was, which amounted to the same thing.

“And I shall lose no time in making my power felt,” thought Gus. “Bob and I have changed places now, and it will do him good to know by experience how I have felt during the last few years of my life. How different the world looks to a rich man! And how different he looks to the world,” added Gus, philosophically. “The world sees in him many things to admire that it does not see in a poor man. With horses and dogs, and boats and money and good clothes at my command, I shall occupy a rather higher position here in Clifton than I did few months ago.”

Soliloquizing thus, Gus strolled along with the air of a young lord, passing through the wide front door, which stood open, and up the stairs to the library, which he entered without the ceremony of knocking. He found his father there, as he expected, and was not a little surprised at the look of alarm his sudden appearance had called to his face.

Mr. Layton was a little, dried-up man, scarcely larger than the sixteen-year-old boy who stood before him, and the hooked nose

and round shoulders, as well as the deprecating, insinuating air which belonged to his son, were particularly noticeable in him, and would have attracted the attention of a stranger at first glance. His eyes were small and sharp, and just now had a wild look in them, and their owner had a habit of turning them from side to side, something after the manner of a frightened deer.

"Why, Augustus," he exclaimed, rising from his chair and approaching his son, "how you startled me! I was not expecting you for a week or two. Is your school out?"

"How are you, governor?" replied Gus, placing a passive hand in his father's eagerly-outstretched palm. "But I say, what's the matter with you? You look like some wild animal that has been driven to bay by the hounds."

"Augustus, hush!" exclaimed his father, quickly. "After all I have done and dared for you I should think you would treat me with more respect."

"Oh, I didn't mean anything, governor; it is merely my way. But really you have

changed during the last few months. See how your hands tremble!"

"It is nothing," replied Mr. Layton. "You frightened me by your abrupt entrance; that's all. Is school out?"

"No, nor will it be until next week. You wonder what brought me here, I suppose? Well, the fellows sent me to coventry, and as I couldn't stand that, I came away."

"Coventry? Where's that?"

"I presume they didn't do such things when you went to school. They got mad at me and told me they wouldn't speak to me or notice me any more than they would a crooked stick. That is what is meant by sending one to coventry."

"They were angry, I suppose, because you beat them in the race."

"But as it happens I didn't beat them. Bob found out that his oar was cut, and he and his crew took their old ones and won as easily as falling off a log. You ought to see the style that Bob has been putting on ever since! He feels too big to walk on the ground. By the way, where will he go when school is out?"

“So he beat you at last, did he!” exclaimed Mr. Layton, in great surprise. “How did he find out that the oar was cut?”

“Sprague says he was the guilty party that told him, but I don’t believe it. I bet you I will find means to get even with him when he comes home. What are you going to do with Bob?”

“Why, this is the only home he has, and I suppose he will come here.”

“Well, then, you will have to take your choice between him and me, for if he stays I shan’t.”

“But what shall I do with him?” asked Mr. Layton.

“That’s for you to decide. Send him to sea—send him anywhere, so long as you get rid of him.”

“And what if he refuses to go?”

“Make him go. You do not intend to send him to school next year, do you?”

“His father made no provision for it in his will.”

“Then tell him so. Has he any money?”

“There was none left to him.”

"Tell him that also. Tell him that he has got his own living to make from this time on, and the sooner he sets about it the better for him, and for us, too," said Gus, rising to his feet and moving toward the door.

"Don't go," said Mr. Layton, hastily. "I have been so lonely with no one to talk to, and now that you have come home you want to run away from me. Sit down."

"Don't worry," replied the dutiful son. "I am not going far. My trunks have arrived and I want to see them brought up stairs."

"I have given you rooms in the south wing over the parlors," said Mr. Layton. "When you have looked at them, tell me how you like them and the way they are furnished."

Gus slammed the door without waiting to hear what his father had to say, and at the head of the stairs met a negro coming up with some of his luggage.

"That trunk and the others go into the north rooms," said Gus.

"Sah?" exclaimed the darky. "Old Mos-ter say dem rooms 'longs to young Mos-ter Nellis."

"And do you hear what *I* say?" demanded Gus. "I say those trunks go into the north rooms, which belong to *me*."

"Yes, sah! Yes, sah! Dat's all right, sah!" replied the obsequious darky, and into the north rooms the trunks went.

"That's the first step," said Gus to himself. "What would Bob think, if he knew it?"

One, to have taken a single glance at these apartments, could have told why Gus ordered his trunks taken in there. There were three of them—a sitting-room, bedroom, and a sort of conservatory, which Bob had fitted up as a museum. By the aid of his father and his father's sea-captains he had there gathered together such a supply of curiosities from all quarters of the globe that, the room being unable to contain them all, they had flowed into the others, and filled every nook and corner of them likewise. Here Gus settled himself down with the air of a conqueror. Not because the rooms were any pleasanter or more desirable than others in the house did he select them, but simply because he had determined to show his cousin that their circum-

stances were exactly reversed—that he was the favored child of fortune now and Bob the poor relation. The curiosities he cared nothing about. Indeed he told himself that when he felt in the right humor he would have them all removed and bundled into the garret as so much useless lumber. He expected to take quiet possession of everything that belonged to Bob, and whether or not he did so we shall presently see.

“Now, boy,” said Gus, addressing himself to the negro after he had seen his trunks stowed away to his satisfaction, “what’s your name?”

“Sam, sah; dat’s my name.”

“Well, Sam, I suppose my ponies are in the barn?”

“Yes, sah, de ponies is dar.”

“My father has a hostler, I presume?”

“Sah? Oh, yes, sah.”

“Then tell him to hitch the ponies to a light buggy and have them at the door in a quarter of an hour. I’ll go out and take an airing,” said Gus to himself, when the darky had disappeared. “There are a good many

people here in Clifton who used to snub me when I was at home last summer, and I want to see if they will do it now."

Having performed his ablutions, Gus proceeded to make his toilet with much more care than usual, but he was ready by the time the carriage was at the door. Taking his seat in the vehicle, he drove through the gate and spent the next hour in exhibiting upon the principal streets of the town the best suit of clothes and the best pair of kid gloves he had ever worn. Bob's fine turnout, which was well known in the village, attracted some attention, but it did not bring Gus any more smiles and bows than he had been wont to receive when he trudged through the streets on foot. The people knew him too well; and, besides, there were some of them (how surprised Gus would have been to know it) who believed he had no business in that fine carriage.

Having shown himself off to his satisfaction, Gus turned the ponies' heads toward the wharves, closely scrutinizing the signs on each side of the street as he passed along. Pres-

ently he seemed to discover the one he was in search of, for he drew up to the sidewalk and got out of the carriage. After hitching the ponies he entered the door under the sign and found himself in a small, dingy bar-room, whose only occupant was a gray-headed, dissolute-looking man, with a wooden leg. This personage started up as Gus entered, and hobbling around the counter waited for him to make known his wants, at the same time looking fixedly at him, as if he saw something about him that was familiar.

"Well, Barlow, how are you?" said Gus.

"Now, I swan, I thought I knowed the cut of your jib!" exclaimed the old man, extending across the counter a huge, begrimed paw, which Gus pretended he did not see. He was a gentleman now, and gentlemen did not shake hands with such characters as Barlow. Besides, he had his new kids on and did not want to soil them. "It's young Mr. Layton, isn't it?"

"Yes, Barlow, that's who it is," replied Gus.

"I thought I knowed your face, but them good clothes of your'n rather got the best of me. You're dressed up within an inch of

your life, ain't you? You don't look much like the dirty, barefoot boy that I used to see playing about the gutters a few years ago. Your father used to live in that little shanty opposite the breakwater, and was so poor that he used to be glad to come to me to find him a job of stevedorin'. I suppose he would turn up his nose at me now."

Gus had come to Barlow's saloon for a particular purpose, but it was not to discuss such matters as these. He did not like to hear about them, so as soon as he saw a chance he broke in with—

"The wheel of fortune has turned a spoke or two in my favor since I last saw you, that is true. But what is the news here in Clifton? I have been away a year, you know."

"Well, there ain't no news 'cepting that ole Cap'n Nellis has slipped off, and that I suppose you knowed long ago. Folks ain't got done talkin' about it, and never will."

"Rather sudden and mysterious, wasn't it?" asked Gus, carelessly.

"Yes, rather sudden, and mebbe mysterious to them as don't suspect nothing. But I can

easy account for it. Howsomever, it ain't no consarn of mine, and I don't meddle with other people's business. Savin' your presence, Mr. 'Gustus, he's the meanest man that ever stepped, is Cap'n Nellis."

"He *was* the meanest man, you mean," suggested the visitor.

"No, I don't mean anything of the kind," insisted Barlow. "I say he *is*, 'cause, barring accident that is likely to fall to men in any part of the world, he's as hale and hearty this minute as me and you be, the old villain!"

"Whew!" whistled Gus, opening his eyes in amazement and looking a little alarmed.

"It's a fact, I tell you," declared Barlow, "'cause I know. But if I did see a few things one dark and rainy mornin', and by putting this and that together got at the whole of the story, so that I can tell it to-day as straight as them that done the business, 'tain't no consarn of nobody's, is it? If I had had a hand in the matter he wouldn't ever turn up again, as he is likely to do."

Gus was too astonished to speak. Here was a startling revelation indeed.

CHAPTER VI.

BOB AT HOME.

BEFORE Gus had time to fairly digest what he had heard or to recover himself sufficiently to elicit further information by inquiry, the old man went on :

“Some folks makes a bungle of everything they do, and you just wait and see if that old scamp don’t turn up again some day, and before he is wanted, too. But I oughtn’t to abuse him before you, seeing that he is your own dead mother’s brother.”

“Oh, you needn’t apologize for that,” said Gus, as soon as he could speak. “I hate him as heartily as you do.”

“And hain’t I got good reason to hate him?” asked Barlow, elevating his wooden leg above the counter. “Just look at that! Wasn’t he a nice cove to go and wing me and

set me to stumping around on this thing all the rest of my days?"

Gus was well acquainted with the circumstances to which the man referred, and knew that he richly deserved the punishment he had received. In the years gone by Barlow had been a sailor, and had on one occasion shipped on a vessel commanded by Captain Nellis. He was so very turbulent that he was kept in irons almost half his time; and once, just after he was released from a long confinement, he, without the slightest provocation, attacked the mate of the vessel so fiercely, and with such evident intention to do him some serious injury, that the captain, in order to save his officer, disabled the ruffian with a ball from his pistol which shattered the bone and rendered amputation necessary. Barlow never forgave his captain for that; and, moreover, when he once got started on the subject he never seemed to be able to stop talking about it.

"I ask you wasn't he a nice fellow to go and do that?" continued the old man, growing more and more enraged the longer he dwelt

upon it. "But for him I might to-day 'a' been the master of as fine a vessel as ever sailed; but here I am, laid up in ordinary, trying to turn an honest penny by keepin' a sailors' boarding-house."

"And turning many a dishonest one by being a land-shark," thought Gus.

"I hate the whole tribe—every one that bears the name of Nellis," the old man went on, fiercely. "If I had my way I'd sweep them all off the earth."

"So would I," said Gus, heartily.

"Now, I'll tell you what's gospel," continued Barlow, leaning over the counter toward his visitor and sinking his voice almost to a whisper—"is that son of his coming here this summer?"

Gus replied that he was.

"Well, if men are as scarce as they were last year he had better keep himself close, or he'll make out the tail-end of a crew as sure as I can get my hands on him."

Gus started back and gazed at the old man in great amazement. Was the latter able to read the thoughts that were passing in his

mind? It certainly looked like it. He had heard that men, even landsmen who knew nothing of the ways of the world, had been kidnapped and shipped off to sea to fill up a crew that could not be completed by voluntary enlistment, and it had occurred to him that that would be a good way to rid himself of the presence of his cousin, if he could only find some one to undertake the task. Knowing the deadly enmity that Barlow cherished toward Captain Nellis, Gus had visited him on purpose to ascertain whether or not he was ripe for such a scheme, and was delighted to know that he had found a willing tool—so willing, indeed, that he himself need have nothing to do with the matter. All he had to do was to remain in the background, and Barlow would do all the work and run all the risk.

This was a highly encouraging state of affairs, and Gus would have felt perfectly at his ease had it not been for the hints Barlow had thrown out in connection with Mr. Nellis's disappearance. Gus turned the conversation back to this subject as soon as he could, but all he learned was that one morning, fol-

lowing a remarkably stormy night, Mr. Nellis's boat had been found on the reefs with a hole knocked in her, and the supposition was that her owner had been out on one of his fishing excursions and had been caught in the storm and drowned. At any rate, he was never seen or heard of afterward. This was no news to Gus, for he had heard it long ago. He wanted to know what Barlow had seen on that stormy morning, but on this subject the old man refused to talk. It was none of his business, he said, and with that the boy was obliged to be contented.

Gus left the sailors' boarding-house heartily wishing that he had never gone near it. He had felt sure of his position before, but he did not feel so now. His uncle had been treacherously dealt with, that was plain, but instead of being safely out of the way was likely to make his appearance at any moment. He could not be far away, either, for Barlow had confidently assured him that he would be certain to turn up, and that, too, before he was wanted. Then what would happen? Gus trembled when he thought of it.

"Father had a hand in it," said he, as he climbed into the buggy. "I can now account for that wild look in his eye, and understand what he meant when he said that after all he had done and dared for me I ought to treat him with more respect. I declare it is the worst thing I ever heard of. If I am to be a party to this business I ought to know just what has happened, so that I can be prepared for any emergency."

But this was something Gus never found out. He visited Barlow a dozen times during the next two days, but could gain nothing further from him. He had several interviews with his father, during which he hinted so broadly at what he had heard that Mr. Layton exhibited the same signs of alarm he had shown when his son first came home; but he volunteered no information, and Gus dared not ask for it. These things made such an impression on him that on the morning of the day Bob was expected home from Elmwood Gus had all his luggage removed to the rooms in the south wing that had been prepared for him, and saw that everything was arranged

in his cousin's room just as he had found it. As matters now stood Bob's star was in the ascendant, and Gus did not think it would be policy to begin an open warfare with him. But he did not for an instant lose sight of what had for the last few months been the main object of his life.

After Gus left the academy affairs went on in much the usual way. True, there was less wrangling and quarrelling among the students, and such fellows as Simpson and Scotty were obliged to keep themselves altogether in the background. The "cut-oar matter," as the boys called it, was thoroughly investigated, and every one who was in any way mixed up with it, and there proved to be at least a score of them, was sent to coventry without ceremony. The culprits at first assumed an independent attitude, and tried to show themselves as indifferent to the students as the latter were to them; but this plan did not succeed very well, and in their hearts they wished they had had nothing to do with Gus Layton and his attempted fraud.

Examination week ended and the closing

exercises over, the students began to separate to their homes, all of them apparently light-hearted and joyous, and speaking confidently of meeting again at the beginning of the next school-year. Bob Nellis was melancholy and low-spirited. As far as he knew, he had no home to go to. There was no kind father waiting to receive him and tell him that he was satisfied with his conduct at school and of the progress he had made there. He was going among those who were almost strangers to him, and who he knew had no interest in him. He took a sorrowful leave of the school and of his mates, and with Sprague for a companion—he lived in the same village that Bob did—set out for home. As long as he remained in sight of the familiar buildings he kept looking back at them as if he never expected to see them again. He did go back to them, however, and prepared for college there; but he first passed through some adventures the like of which he had never dreamed of.

“Now, Bob, I want you to tell me what is the matter with you,” said Sprague, laying

his hand affectionately on his companion's shoulder. "Ever since your uncle countermanded your order for that new shell you haven't acted at all like yourself. Do you think your uncle has gone back on you?"

"I know it," said Bob. "But, Sprague, you will excuse me for not saying too much. When I get home I shall know just how the land lays. I may be wrong, but that's the way things look now."

"Only just one question more and then I'll drop the matter," said Sprague, earnestly. "I heard before I came here that your father used to be worth a lot of money. Has your uncle got hold of it?"

Bob nodded.

"Well, I am sorry for you, and I know how to appreciate your feelings; but I will tell you this, Bob: Whenever things get too hot for you, come to my house."

Bob thanked him from the bottom of his heart. It served to show him that he had at least one friend left in Clifton.

Bob left the academy on Thursday evening, and awoke the next morning to find the steamer

in which he had taken passage tied up to the wharf in Clifton. There was the usual crowd to meet her, early as it was, and among the lookers-on Bob found many friends and acquaintances who were all eager to shake him by the hand. Although he was glad to see them he excused himself as soon as he could, and having given his luggage into the charge of a drayman, hurried away. He wanted to see his home once more, even if had no right there. There was one friend, at least, who would be glad to see him, and Bob was disappointed as well as surprised that he did not find him on the wharf, waiting for him. It was old Ben Watson, his father's gardener. But Bob knew where to find him, and he intended to visit him before he presented himself to his uncle. Perhaps Ben could tell him some things he wanted to know. With this determination, Bob went through the iron gate which opened into the grounds that had once belonged to his father; but instead of following the broad carriage-way that led up to the door he turned into a by-path, and presently found himself standing before a neat

little cottage that was hidden away among the trees. There was an air of desolation about it that Bob had never noticed before. The door did not open at his knock, and when he looked in at the window he was surprised to see that the house was deserted—there was no furniture in it. Bob did not know what to make of it.

With a sigh of regret he turned into the path again, and after a few minutes' walk reached the stables. Here another disappointment awaited him. He found a man dressed as a hostler, and he was engaged in rubbing down one of Bob's own ponies; but the face he turned toward him was not that of old Jack Couch, who had charge of the stables during his father's lifetime. It was the face of a negro, and one Bob had never seen before.

If there had not been a person in the world with whom he was acquainted, Bob could not have felt more desolate and friendless than he did at that moment. When his father was alive there were four servants employed on the place—two in the house, one in the stables, and one in the garden. They

were all men, and every one of them was a sailor who had grown gray in his father's service. Bob was a favorite with them all ; and if any of them held a higher place in his estimation than the others, it was Ben Watson, the gardener. Many a relic and curiosity had the old fellow brought to him from over the sea, and many an hour had he spent in his cabin listening to his thrilling tales of the deep ; and it was there, beside Ben's fire, that he had promised his father that, come what might, he would never be a sailor. The boy had often thought of old Ben since his father's death, and impatiently counted the hours of meeting him, but now he was gone.

"They're all gone," thought Bob, turning away from the stable without returning the hostler's civil greeting, "and I am left alone. They have been cast adrift in their old age, in spite of father's promise that they should always be cared for ; and if I may judge by uncle's letters, I must go, too. If I had never made that promise I would be at sea in less than twenty-four hours ; but it is as binding now as it was while father was living."

"Sah! Sah!" said a voice, arousing him from his reverie.

Bob looked up and saw a negro hurrying toward him.

"Sah!" repeated the negro, "ole Moster Layton done sent me to tell you dat dese is private grounds, an' he don't 'low no trespassin' from anybody."

Bob was thunderstruck. Did his uncle intend to cast him off in that style?

"I hates to say it to a gemman," continued the negro, "but ole Moster say dem's his 'perative orders."

"Does—does he know I am Bob Nellis?" asked our hero, at a venture.

"Sah?" yelled the darky. "Is you Mos-ter Bob? 'Fore Moses, we's expectin' you. Your rooms am all done fix up nice. I fix 'em myself. Come dis way, sah. Your uncle is in de library."

Bob, whose equanimity was not altogether restored by this assurance and the change his name had produced in the darky's bearing toward him, followed to the house, and was presently ushered into the library. His uncle

was there, busy with some papers, which he hastily bundled out of sight as his nephew entered.

"Why, Bob!" he exclaimed, with more apparent cordiality than the boy had expected to see him exhibit, "I didn't know that was you when I sent Sam to order you out. Sit down. You are welcome to my house."

This was said with so much emphasis on the pronoun that Bob took his cue from it and at once decided on his course.

"Uncle Luther," said he, suddenly, "I should like to know just how matters stand here. You said in one of your letters that you would explain everything when you saw me."

(Bob had noted, with some bitterness, that his uncle did not say, "When you come home.")

"Never mind that now," said Mr. Layton, hastily. "We will have some breakfast before we talk business. I can tell you everything you wish to know in two minutes."

"Then please tell me now," persisted Bob. "I have ordered my luggage brought to this

house because I did not know where else to send it; but if I have no right or interest here, of course I don't want to stay."

"H'm," said Mr. Layton.

"I hope you'll be plain with me, for I am prepared for the worst," continued Bob.

His uncle settled back in his chair and coughed ominously once or twice, as if he were preparing to say something disagreeable.

"Well, Bob," said Mr. Layton, speaking hurriedly, as if he wished to get through with a very unpleasant duty, "I must tell you plainly that no provision has been made for you. I supposed, of course, as every one else did, that you were to be your father's heir, and why you were not I am sure I cannot tell; perhaps you can. I can tell you, however, that a codicil to his will, in which the property was left to you, makes me the sole heir. The will has been admitted to probate, and you can obtain a copy of it for a dollar or two, which I will cheerfully furnish you, if you are out of funds. As I suppose, you want to do something now for yourself, I have taken the liberty to make arrangements for you which I

hope you will like. I trust that you have made the most of your opportunities, for that school is a very expensive one, and none but wealthy men can afford to send their sons there."

Bob listened to this speech, and when it was concluded told himself that if his uncle had not repeated it in private until he had learned it by heart, he certainly spoke and acted as if he had. Of one thing he was now satisfied, and that was, he was not to return to the academy. His uncle could not afford it. Bob could not help recalling the fact that his father had kept Gus there three years at his own expense, but he said nothing about it.

"As your father followed the sea for a livelihood during the earlier part of his life, I suppose you must have some love for the water, and I suggest that you adopt his profession," continued Mr. Layton. "You will have opportunities to see different countries, and under my patronage promotion will be certain if you prove yourself worthy of it."

"I cannot do it," said Bob. "I promised I would never be a sailor."

"But at the time your father extorted that promise from you he probably did not imagine that you would ever be thrown upon your own resources. Besides, he is dead."

"But the promise is binding, all the same," said Bob.

"Then what do you intend to do?" asked his uncle, with some impatience. "You have got to do something."

"I have not made up my mind. I can turn my hand to almost anything, and shall not starve."

"Well, perhaps you will need a little time to look about you, and meanwhile your rooms are quite at your service. Now that we have settled the matter we'll go to breakfast."

But Bob did not feel in the humor for breakfast. He could not have eaten a mouthful at Mr. Layton's table if he had tried—his heart was too full. He wanted to get away by himself, so he made his excuses to his uncle, who did not seem at all unwilling to part with him, and hurried out of the house.

CHAPTER VII.

BEN SURPRISES EVERYBODY.

AND where was Gus all this while? He was just where he had been every day since he came from Elmwood, and that was in Barlow's saloon. The boarding-house keeper was almost the only one there was in the village who would have anything to do with him, and Gus liked to be in his company, for the old man talked of nothing but the "meanness" of which Captain Nellis had been guilty, and was never tired of rehearsing the plans he had laid against his son. Gus, knowing that Bob was expected on this particular morning, dropped into the saloon as if by accident, but in reality for the purpose of directing Barlow's attention to him in case the old man did not happen to see him when he landed from the steamer. But Barlow always knew who landed in that port, day or

night. His house fronted on the wharf, and by taking his stand in the door he could see everyone who passed. This morning Bob was almost the first passenger that left the steamer, and Barlow knew him at once.

"There's that conceited young prig now," said he, quickly. "I didn't tell you that I had got things all fixed for him, did I, Mr. 'Gustus?'"

"No," replied the boy.

"Well, I will tell you," said Barlow, leaving the door and walking to his accustomed place behind the counter, "because I know the secret will be safe with you, and perhaps I shall want you to help me."

"Be careful," interrupted Gus, nodding his head toward a sailor who was seated near the end of the counter with his hat drawn down over his eyes, as if fast asleep.

"No fear of him," replied Barlow. "He has been snoring there for the last hour. As I was going to say, a ship is to sail to-night for Australia and the Spice Islands, and the cap'n has been here a dozen times during the last few days, begging me to raise a crew for

him by fair means or foul. I've got all but two aboard, and I've got them in my eye. Bob Nellis is one, and there's the other," said Barlow, pointing to the sailor before spoken of.

"Who is he?" asked Gus.

"Why, don't you know? Then it must be because he keeps his hat down over his face. If he would raise it for a moment you would see that he is old Ben Watson, your uncle's gardener. When your father got possession of the place he kicked out all the old servants, as you know, and hired niggers to fill their places. I suppose he don't want them about, to remind him of his brother-in-law, and I don't blame him. Ever since he was discharged, Ben has been layin' around with no heart to go at anything, and he owes me twenty dollars for board and grub. I've tried my best to ship him in a crew by fair means, for Ben is a good sailor, but the old fellow says he has too many years on his shoulders. But I must have him for the J. W. Smart, 'cause I can't find anybody else that is goin' to sail, and so I shall have to doctor his tea to-night."

“Drug it?” asked Gus.

“Yes; put him to sleep and take him aboard before he awakes. And now about Bob. He is going up to your house, I suppose, and if you will keep an eye on him, and get him out into the garden to-night about eight o’clock, me and my barkeeper will slip up and take him in tow, and no one will be the wiser for it. I shall make sixty dollars by shipping him and Ben, and I’ll give you ten of it. What do you say?”

“It is a bargain,” replied Gus, wondering at the readiness with which he accepted the villainous offer. “I will be on hand when you want me.”

“You will never see him again when once he is aboard that ship,” continued Barlow. “Cap’n French is the hardest ship-master that ever sailed, and when a man doesn’t do to suit him, he quietly knocks him overboard. More than that, the ship belongs to old man Brock, who feeds his hands on nothin’ and pays them the same. He has to promise them thirty dollars a month, for that is what they are payin’ out of this port, but he always

orders his skippers to treat them harshly, so that they will desert the first chance they get, and the cap'n fills their places with cheaper hands, which they can always find in foreign ports. Between the belayin'-pins which Cap'n French slings about so reckless, and the yellow fever, and the niggers among whom they are going to trade, Mr. Bob will have a lively time of it. Now, don't forget to have him out of the house to-night at eight o'clock sharp, and me and my barkeeper will do the rest. We'll just slip up there—"

Barlow suddenly paused and startled his auditor with the heaviest kind of an oath. Gus followed the direction of his gaze and saw that it rested on the sailor, who had raised his hat from his face and was looking at them with wide-open eyes. It was old Ben Watson, sure enough, and he had heard every word of the conversation.

Never in his life had Gus been more astounded and alarmed. He leaned against the counter and stared stupidly at old Ben, and even Barlow seemed to be at his wits' end. The old sailor was the only one who retained

his presence of mind. Hastily putting on his hat he arose and started for the door; but his indignation got the better of his prudence, and he stopped to say a parting word to the conspirators.

“You’ll kidnap me and Bob and ship us off to foreign parts against our will, will you!” he exclaimed. “Not if I know myself. I’ll have the pair of you arrested in less’n an hour!”

These words seemed to bring Barlow to his senses. Like all men of his class he had faithful assistants close at hand, who had lent their aid in more than one emergency like the present, and he shouted out their names with so much earnestness that they lost no time in making their appearance.

“Here, Bull! Bull! I say, Samson! Show yourself!” he roared.

The first was a huge bull-dog which was lying on the steps in front of the house, and the second was the barkeeper, a man who, judging by his size and apparent muscular power, was rightly named. These two worthies came in at opposite doors at the same instant. The dog at once launched himself



BEN ON HIS METTLE.



at the sailor's throat, but was met half-way by a heavy chair, which Ben caught up and threw at him with such accuracy of aim that the fierce brute was stretched motionless on the floor. In an instant he turned upon the barkeeper. Just as he put out his hands to seize Ben from behind he was met by a stunning blow in the face—a regular one-two, which showed that the old sailor had received some early training in boxing—and he, too, was stretched on the floor, quivering like a man who had just had his death-wound.

“Got any more help?” said Ben. “I ought to put you by the side of them, you old land-shark, and I will, too, if you open your head.”

But it seems that Ben was not alone. There was a scurrying of feet out in front of the house, and who should come in but Leon Sprague and his father. They had had some business on the docks and were just going home when their attention was attracted by the noise of the fight going on in Barlow's saloon. Mr. Sprague was a man the boarding-house keeper was not at all delighted to

see. During the short time he had been in the village he had been elected police magistrate, and of course he had it in his power to get at the bottom of the matter.

"What is the meaning of this?" he exclaimed. "Put down that chair!"

"Gus Layton!" said Sprague, astonished almost beyond measure to find his old stroke there in the saloon.

"Yes, sir; it is Gus Layton," responded Ben. "He and that old land-shark have been laying their plans to kidnap Bob and me to-night and send us off to foreign parts. They would have taken me at once if I hadn't laid the bull-dog and barkeeper out. I want the pair of them arrested."

"It's a lie!" said the barkeeper, arousing himself at this moment.

"Yes, of course it is!" exclaimed Barlow, catching at the idea thus thrown out. "It's a lie out of the whole cloth. Ain't it, Gus?"

"Ye-es," said Gus, who didn't know whether he stood on his head or his feet, so frightened was he. "Of course it is a lie. He was asleep, and dreamed it all."

"That's the idea," echoed Barlow. "He was asleep there on that table, with his hat over his eyes, and dreamed about being kidnapped. There ain't a word of truth in it. Gus came in here to ask me—to say that he had seen—to ask me how I was, in fact, and I told him I was pretty well—"

"If I ain't telling you the truth I don't want to lay up anything for old age," said Ben, earnestly; and one couldn't have looked into his honest face and accused him of telling a falsehood. "I was just as wide-awake as I am at this moment, and heard them talk the matter all over. When I got up to go, Barlow yelled for the barkeeper and the bulldog."

"I believe that is so," Sprague whispered to his father. "You are Ben Watson, are you not?"

"Yes, sir; that's who I am."

"Well, did you know that Bob has come home?"

"I never knew it until to-day, sir. I want to see him the first thing I do."

"I wouldn't make out a warrant for any-

body's arrest until Ben has had an interview with Bob," said Sprague to his father. "I have heard a good deal about Ben Watson, but I never heard of his telling a lie yet. Come on. I'll go up to the house with you."

"Now let me tell you something before I go away," said Mr. Sprague. "You are beginning to keep a most disorderly house here, and the very next time you have a fight here I shall shut you up."

"I tell you, sir, we ain't been keepin' no disorderly house," replied Barlow. He was as mad a man as ever stepped, but he took good care not to show it. "That fellow has been asleep and dreamed—"

"I understand all about it," said Mr. Sprague. "I only caution you against having another fight here."

Barlow walked around behind the counter, the barkeeper got up and rubbed his face, which began to be puffed out around the eyes, the bull-dog staggered to his feet and began reeling across the floor, and Gus leaned on the place where the drinks were served, so utterly amazed and bewildered that he could not speak.

“Those two are going up to your house,” said Barlow, recovering his speech with an effort. He had first uttered a volley of oaths when he saw his bull-dog and his barkeeper worsted, and had gathered up a chair to take a hand in the muss, but his swear-words grew soft the moment Mr. Sprague entered. He knew that the magistrate had a right to fine him for every oath to which he gave utterance. “They are going up to your house, and they’ll see Bob there.”

“That’s just what I am afraid of,” said Gus, walking up and down in front of the counter and wringing his hands. “I don’t see what made me come here, anyway.”

“No more do I,” said Barlow, looking savagely at him. “The whole thing is out on us. You had better get out of here as soon as you can, and don’t come to us with any more trickery.”

“Why, this was your own doing!” said Gus, surprised to learn that he was the cause of all Barlow’s trouble. “You hollered for the barkeeper and the bull-dog—”

“But I wouldn’t ’a’ done it if you hadn’t

been here!" retorted the old man, angrily. "Come now, get out!"

Barlow came out from behind the counter and Gus made haste to get through the open door into the street; but where should he go? He pulled his hat down over his eyes, thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and walked along, thinking the matter over.

"If that man ever gets into another row I'll shut him up," repeated Mr. Sprague, as they hurried on in the direction of the house which had once been Bob's home. "I have heard of such things as shipping a lot of landsmen to make up a ship's company, but I never thought it would be brought home to me in this manner. Watson, you're sure you were not asleep and dreamed it all?"

"I told you nothing but the truth," said Ben, as if he hoped in some way to make Mr. Sprague believe it. "I can repeat every word they said. You ask Bob, and see if he will believe me. I never told a lie in my life, except when I was telling some stories of the sea."

"Well, Leon will go around there with you

and I'll go home. And I want you to add my earnest invitation to Leon's, and tell Bob that if he can't see his way clearly to stopping there he must come up to my house."

Ben promised compliance, and Mr. Sprague turned up the street that led to his residence.

"I'll tell you another thing," said Ben. "That man Barlow says I owe him twenty dollars for grub and lodging. I'll go there to-morrow and pay him, though to tell the truth I didn't suppose I owed him anything. I've got money that I saved while Cap'n Nellis was here, and if Bob wants it he can have it."

"You say when Mr. Nellis was here," replied Leon. "Then you don't think he is dead?"

"He's as lively as you or I at this minute," said Ben, earnestly.

"Then why don't you go and get him?" asked Leon.

"Ah! That's the trouble. We don't know where he is. The ocean is large, and there's a heap of islands scattered around in it."

"But Barlow might have killed him. They went for you pretty rough."

“They didn’t kill nobody; Barlow hasn’t stooped quite low enough for that yet. I don’t say that Barlow had a hand in it, but I think I know who had. And this ‘will’ business. I tell you it is all a fraud.”

Ben became silent after this, and said no more until they had opened the iron gate and moved up the sidewalk to the door that led to Bob’s home; for it was Bob’s home in spite of all that happened, and Ben acknowledged the fact. It didn’t make any difference how many people came there to live, the will wasn’t right, even though it had been admitted to probate. Mr. Layton was on hand, and he sent Sam with orders to clear them out. He knew Sprague and Watson, and he was afraid to have them come there.

“Sah, it’s moster’s positive commands dat you,” began Sam—

“Never mind that,” said Sprague. “We have come here to see Bob. If he is about the house ask him to come here.”

“I—I don’t know, sah,” hesitated Sam, “but I think he has gone away. He hain’t been around de house since ’arly dis morn-

ing. I will go and see what moster say about it."

The negro disappeared, locking the front door behind him, whereupon Sprague looked at Ben and smiled. It made Ben madder than ever. It was the first time he had ever had that front door locked upon him. The darky passed along the hall until he reached the library door, upon which he pounded with his fingers. He opened it in response to the summons from the inside, and found Mr. Layton pacing the floor. He was paler now than he was the first time we saw him, and trembled so visibly that any one could have noticed it.

"Dem gemmen out dar gwine to see Mos-ter Bob," said Sam, in a tone of voice that Mr. Layton did not like. It showed that the darky understood that there was something wrong. "Yes, sah; they gwine to see him. Mebbe he up in his room, sah."

"That's a pretty way to talk!" said Mr. Layton. "They come onto my grounds without being invited, and then say they are going to see somebody. Did you lock the front door?"

“Oh, yes, sah ; I locked it.”

“Then let them ring until they are tired. They will soon get weary of it and go away. Have you seen Augustus lately? Well, when he comes, tell him that I want to see him.”

But it seems that Sprague was not in the habit of ringing the bells on doors that had been locked against him. He had another and a better way of reaching the ears of the boy he wanted to see. After waiting a sufficient length of time for the negro to open the door he threw back his head and whistled, shrilly, three long whistles and a short one, and he knew that if Bob was anywhere about the house that signal would be sure to bring him out. Nor was he disappointed. One of the upper windows was thrown up and Bob's head was thrust out. He did not look much like the stroke of the winning boat that had been rowed in the race at Elmwood. His face was pale and sunken, and his eyes looked as though they had long been in want of sleep. But his voice was as strong as ever.

“Halloo, Sprague ; I didn't expect to see

you again so soon," said he. "Why, isn't that Ben Watson? I'll be down directly."

In a few moments they heard his steps coming down the stairs. He tried the door, but it was locked, and he stopped to turn the key. When he appeared on the porch his face wore an angry expression which even Sprague had never seen there before.

"I didn't lock it, boys," said he, as he hurried down the steps to shake Watson by the hand. "I heard you talking, but I didn't know who it was. It is the first time a door has been locked in the face of my friends."

"But that ain't the worst of it, Mister Bob," said Ben, lifting his hat to the boy out of respect to his old commander. "You know that saloon that is run by that old land-shark Barlow, don't you?"

"I know of it, but I have never been there," returned Bob. "What of it? Has anything been going on there?"

"Well, I should say so," said Ben. "Gus Layton has been there, and him and Barlow have made all arrangements for shipping us

on the ship Smart and sending us off to foreign parts."

Bob was utterly amazed, and began to see that Gus was not quite so helpless as he thought he was. He looked toward Sprague to confirm the story, and he nodded his head.

"Did you hear it?" asked Bob.

"No; but we got there in time to help Ben. He had the bull-dog and the barkeeper laid out and was getting ready to defend himself against Barlow, who had a chair.

"And then they said I was asleep and dreamed it all!" chimed in Ben. "I never was more wide-awake in my life. Mister Bob, you don't want to go near the garden to-night."

"I will see a lawyer about it this very afternoon," said Bob, with a very determined expression on his face. "I am not going to put up with this thing any longer. They seem to think that, because they have taken my father's property away, they can drive me out of town; but I'll show them that they can't."

"Good for you, Mister Bob!" said Ben;

and he reached out his hand for another shake. "I always said that you would come out at the top of the heap. I've got some money, and you can have it all."

"Thank you, Ben; but I don't think I shall have need for it."

"Let us go a little farther away from the house before we do any more talking," said Sprague. "These windows are open, and it would be any easy matter for someone to slip up and hear everything we said."

"Now, Ben, I want you to begin and tell me all about that kidnapping business," said Bob, as they walked along toward the gate. "How was he going to do it?"

As they walked away somebody behind one of the curtains, near one of the open windows, straightened up and staggered toward the library. It was Mr. Layton, and he had heard every word of their conversation. When he reached the library he sank into the nearest chair and rang the bell for the negro, who presently appeared.

"Sam," said Mr. Layton, in a trembling voice, "put on your cap and see if you can

find Augustus somewhere about the streets. If you can, tell him that I want to see him directly—directly, mind you. Those are my imperative orders.”

CHAPTER VIII.

BOB GETS SOME MONEY.

SAM was a long time finding Gus Layton, and when he did he was sitting in the shade of a warehouse watching a vessel that was getting under way. How heartily he wished that Bob Nellis and old Ben Watson were on board that ship! She was going away for a two years' cruise, and Gus was certain that something would happen to them before they came back.

"Hi, Moster 'Gustus, I found you at last!" exclaimed the darky, as he hurried up. "Your father wants to see you at home this blessed minute. Dem is his 'perative orders."

"Sam," said Gus, putting his hand into his pocket and pulling out a piece of money, "has anything been going on there?"

"Thank you, sah. Not de fustest thing.

Ebber'everything is just as it was when you were dar."

"Nobody to see me, I suppose?"

"Dar's been nobody dere to see you, but dere's been somebody dere to see Moster Bob."

"I don't see what you fellows call that snipe 'Mister' for," said Gus, impatiently. "That title belongs to me. Who were there to see Bob?"

"Wal, sah, Moster 'Gustus, dere was one man dere dat used to be your uncle's gardener," replied Sam. "And de other one was—"

"Watson?" cried Gus.

"I reckon so, sah. And de other one was a right smart-lookin' chap, just about your size. Is you comin' home, sah?"

"It was Sprague, I'll bet," said Gus.

It was a very short road with Gus that had no turning, and here he was, right in the midst of his schemes for mischief, and they began to come back to him. How he wished that Watson had kept out of that saloon, or rather, how he wished he had kept away from it himself!

“Is you comin’ home?” inquired the darky.

“You go on ahead at your usual gait and tell father that I will be with him soon,” replied Gus. “I may as well face it down one time as another,” he added to himself. “What can I say that will induce father to believe I was in that saloon by accident? I tell you, I wish I had steered clear of Barlow!”

Gus arose to his feet and started toward home, but with every step he took he felt that he was drawing nearer to his doom. The closer he came to the iron gate the more confused his thoughts seemed to grow, and when he went down the hall and opened the door of the library, without the ceremony of knocking, he had made up his mind that Watson had been asleep and dreamed it all; that nobody had said a word about kidnapping him. He found his father pacing back and forth, wringing his hands as if he were in great bodily distress.

“Why, what’s the matter?” he asked, innocently.

“Augustus, how does it come that you were

in Barlow's saloon?" asked his father. "Have I not often told you to keep away from those places? What did you hear about kidnapping Bob and that old gardener?"

"Why, nothing at all," said Gus, opening his eyes in surprise. "Ben Watson was in there asleep, and when he woke up he accused Barlow of getting up a scheme against him. Has he been here? What did he say?"

"He has said enough in Bob's ears to prompt him to call on a lawyer this very afternoon," said Mr. Layton, looking sharply at Gus.

This was rather more than Gus had bargained for. He looked around for the nearest chair and sat down. For once the face he turned toward his father was as white as a sheet. That was one thing that Gus was always afraid of. He might get a lawyer to examine into the matter, and he would be pretty apt to find a screw loose somewhere.

"I don't like this lawyer business," said Gus.

"Why, Augustus, it is perfectly straight," said his father. "The more lawyers he gets the better I shall like it. They will have

every facility granted them for making a thorough investigation. One would think, from the way you talk, that you suspected something yourself."

"Father, there's no need of your beating about the bush any longer," said Gus, who thought, if he had to make a clean breast of the matter, it was time his father did so, too. "What makes you so nervous and excited?"

"It is the trouble you have got into with that fellow Barlow," said Mr. Layton. "I know all about it, and there's no use for you to try to deceive me. Now, I want you to tell me the whole thing. I have a little influence, and perhaps I can bring some good out of it."

"What do you know?"

"I know that you went into that saloon without anybody sending for you; that Ben Watson was asleep there on the table—or had his head pillowed on his arms as if he was asleep, but he was in reality wide-awake; that you began talking about the crew of the Smart; that you made up a scheme for kidnapping Bob—"

"I never did it in this world!" interrupted

Gus. "You go and ask Barlow, and see if anything of the kind happened."

"I think I see myself going near that skin-flint!" said Mr. Layton. "Anyhow, you had your plans made up for taking Ben and Bob off on board that ship, and it was when Bob roused up and told you of it that Barlow shouted for his bull-dog and barkeeper."

"It isn't so! it isn't so!" said Gus, pounding with his fingers on the table.

"And to make the matter still worse, Mr. Sprague and his boy came in at that moment," pursued Mr. Layton, paying no heed to the interruption. "I tell you, Augustus, you have got yourself into a scrape. You begin to see it now, don't you?" he added, as Gus looked down at the carpet. "I don't know what will become of you if you keep on this way. Bob was doing well enough, and I don't see why you couldn't let him alone."

There was silence for a few minutes, for Gus had about got to the end of his rope. His father knew all about it, and he couldn't think what else to say. After waiting in vain for Gus to speak, he said:

“I got the most of this while listening at the window when Bob was talking to Leon and Ben. What more they had to say I don’t know, for they walked away, so that I couldn’t hear them; but by putting this and that together I got at the true story of the matter. You can tell me the rest I want to know. Are you willing to do it? I may be able to bring some good out of it, as I said before.”

Thus urged, Gus determined that the best thing he could do would be to tell the truth. He began at the beginning and told everything Barlow had said, touching lightly upon what he had said himself, however, and when he had finished he settled back in his chair as if he was glad to have the load off his mind. His father did not interrupt him until he got through, and then he said:

“I don’t see why you did not tell me this at the start. As I said a little while back, you have got yourself in a pretty scrape. Suppose something should happen to Bob, and he should be kidnapped and sent to sea against his will; where would you be?”

“By George! I never thought of that,” said Gus, growing frightened again.

“Barlow knows that I do not approve of such doings as that,” continued Mr. Layton, “and after Bob had been gone for a month or two, he would come to me for money.”

“For what?” asked Gus. “You wouldn’t hire him to send Bob off to sea.”

“That may all be. I might never have dreamed that he had such a thing in mind; but don’t you know that he would come to me for money to make him keep his mouth shut?”

“That’s something new to me,” said Gus, fairly trembling with excitement and fear. “He could do it as easy as falling off a log, couldn’t he? But I don’t suppose that Barlow knows enough to do that.”

“Don’t worry about it. He would come for money, and if I refused to give it to him, how long would it be before everybody in town would hear of it?”

“He would be as deep in the mud as you are,” suggested Gus. “If you went to jail he would have to go, too.”

"But, Augustus, I don't want to go to jail," said Mr. Layton, in a trembling voice. "Think what a position it would be for me. Now, I think I can see a way out of it, and that is by buying Bob."

"How are you going to do it?" asked Gus, who became interested at once.

"I will give him a hundred dollars a month if he will take his trunks out of this house and never come back here again," said Mr. Layton.

"That's the idea!" exclaimed Gus, unconsciously uttering the same expression that Barlow had made use of a short time before. "But a hundred dollars is a power of money, father. Don't you suppose if you were to offer him seventy-five dollars it would do just as well?"

"No, I don't think it would. Bob has always had money when he chose to call for it, and a hundred dollars is little enough. Ben has got a nice little house down here, and Bob can go there and live as well as not. Of one thing we will be sure, anyway: Bob will never come to this house again."

"That's the idea!" said Gus, again. "How will you send him the money—by check?"

"I'll send him a check the first of every month; that will save him the trouble of coming here."

"That won't interfere with what you are to give me?"

"Not at all; and I think it is the best thing we can do. I wish you would be around when I talk to him—"

"Oh, that's asking too much," said Gus, getting upon his feet. "You must remember that I was in the saloon when we talked of kidnapping him, and that it would hardly do."

"Perhaps, after all, you had better stay away," said Mr. Layton, after reflecting a moment. "But I will put in a good word for you when I see a chance. I will tell him that you and I were talking the matter over, and concluded it wasn't right to turn him loose to face the world without a cent, and that we have decided to give him a part of our incomes."

"That will be better than if I was here," said Gus. "But what if Bob won't take it?"

"Eh? Oh, I don't think he will go back on a hundred dollars. You see, Bob won't have to do any work after he gets to Ben's house, and that will take a heap off his mind."

"A hundred dollars is enough for him," answered Gus.

"You couldn't stay around and see him when he comes in, I suppose?"

"Well, I'll stay around, and if he looks good-natured when he comes in I'll tell him you want to see him; but if he looks cross I won't open my head. You had better see him yourself."

This much having been decided upon, Gus went up to his room to remain there until his father had had an interview with Bob, while Mr. Layton opened the door of the library so that he would be sure to see Bob when he came in.

"I'll tell you I wouldn't stay in this house after what has happened down there at Barlow's saloon, and if Bob has the pluck I have given him credit for he'll not stay, either," said Gus, drawing one of the curtains before

the window and seating himself so that he could see his cousin when he came down the walk. "I would get away from here as soon as I could. He must know he is not wanted here."

In a few minutes he saw Bob coming, and he fairly trembled with excitement when he saw how enraged he was. He walked like a boy who had made up his mind that he wasn't going to stand that nonsense any longer. He bounded up the steps as though he had a right there, to quote from Gus, and stamped through the hall as though there was somebody waiting for him. And so there was. Mr. Layton came out of the library, his face all wrinkled up with smiles; but it was strange how quickly those smiles all went away when he caught sight of Bob's face. He began to fear that he was going to have trouble with the boy.

"Ah, Bob! I was just waiting for you," said he.

"Oh, you were, were you?" said Bob, with something like a sneer.

"Yes. Come in. I want to talk to you."

"You will have to talk to me mighty clever

to put me out of the notion of having Gus and Barlow arrested," said Bob, seating himself in the nearest chair and placing his hat upon the table. "I never heard of such a thing before. Why, it is downright—"

"Why, what is the matter?" asked Mr. Layton. He thought he spoke calmly enough, but his voice trembled in spite of himself.

"There's no use of feigning ignorance," said Bob, in a tone of deep disgust. "Gus and Barlow have been laying a plan to kidnap Ben and me to-night and send us off to some country we never dreamed of. Gus has told you all about it, I suppose? If he didn't, he ought to. You sympathize with him more deeply than anybody else."

"Yes, I heard about that," said Mr. Layton. "Ben was asleep and dreamed it all. You surely don't suppose that I would agree to anything of that sort?"

"You may not have agreed to it, but the plot has been laid, all the same. What were you going to say to me?"

"Gus has just been here, talking about you, and if he was going to send you off to foreign

countries I don't see why he should propose to give you a hundred dollars a month."

"Have you agreed to that?"

"I have."

"Then I will take it, glad to get that much out of you. But I'll tell you, Mr. Layton, it will not keep me from putting a lawyer on the track of this 'will' business. That much I have determined upon."

"You may have all the lawyers you want," said Mr. Layton. "If it will be of any use to you, I will get one of my own and put him on the case with you."

It must be confessed that this remark pretty nearly took Bob's breath away. He looked sharply at his uncle to see if he really meant what he said, and Mr. Layton met his gaze without flinching.

"You seem to think there is something wrong with your father's will," said the latter. "I assure you there is not. I wouldn't have touched a cent of his property if it hadn't been willed to me. I trust you know me well enough to believe that."

"Oh, yes; I know you. What I am go-

ing to find out is, whether or not the will is all right. Now, if you will count out my hundred dollars I will go up stairs and pack my luggage."

"It shall be ready for you when you come down," said Mr. Layton, with much more eagerness than he had thus far shown. "I hope you are not going away out of town, are you?"

"Oh, no; I shall be here, and give Gus another chance to kidnap me, if he wants to. I shall be at hand, too, to give that lawyer any assistance he may wish."

"I wish you would get over your idea of Gus trying to kidnap you," said Mr. Layton, impatiently. "He never did it in this world."

"Of course I will believe it when he proves it before a magistrate's court," said Bob; and he couldn't help smiling when he thought of the way his lawyer would wind him up on his cross-examination. "But he will find that a difficult thing to do."

Without waiting to hear what else his uncle had to say, Bob went up stairs to his room; and as he had not yet wholly unpacked his

trunk, it did not take him long to get the things together that he wanted to take with him. One trunk generally held all the things he needed when he went to Elmwood, but this time he took three, his little fowling-piece and his fishing-rod not being forgotten. By the time he had them all packed the carriage appeared, with Ben Watson on the box beside the driver. Ben didn't hesitate to come in now, as he would if he had been alone. The house was Bob's, he could swear to that, and he had a right to go where he pleased in it.

"Now, you take these trunks down and I will go and bid my uncle good-bye," said Bob.

"Aw! Are you going to see that fellow again?" inquired Ben. "It's small good-bye he will give you, seeing that you are going to live with me."

"But, Ben, I've got a hundred dollars coming to me," said Bob. "He offered to give it to me of his own accord."

"Well, that's better than I expected of him. I guess he's mighty fearful that the captain will turn up yet."

Bob went down to the library and found his uncle there alone. A roll of bills lay upon the table, with a paper-weight on them to hold them down. He looked all around for Gus, but could not see anything of him. He wanted to say a word to him before he went, but Gus was still in his own room.

"Is this money intended for me?" asked Bob. "Then I will take it and bid you good-bye."

"Good-bye, Bob," said Mr. Layton, holding out his hand, but seeing that Bob did not take it he speedily drew it in again. "Are you going to live here in town? I want to know, so that I can send you a check on the first of every month."

"Address it to me here at this post-office and I will get it all right," said Bob. "I will tell you, for your satisfaction, that I am going to live with Ben Watson."

"Ah! Ben is a good fellow."

"I know he is. He thinks father was foully dealt with on that morning he disappeared, and he will be near at hand to give my lawyer some points."

“That’s a good thing. I am glad you are going to investigate it. Good-bye.”

The trunks being all brought down by the time Bob got out of the library, he took his seat in the carriage and was whirled away to his new home. Of course he felt bad on leaving the place of his boyhood, but there was no help for it. Gus held the curtain aside so that he could watch him, and when the carriage had disappeared through the iron gate he opened the door and went down to his father.

CHAPTER IX.

BOB CALLS ON A LAWYER.

THERE!" said Bob, when his uncle's gates had closed behind him and the carriage was fairly under way for his new home; "I hope I shall never go inside those grounds again unless my father is here to go with me. Now, Ben, I would like to know what you mean by going inside that saloon? You wouldn't have done so when my father was here."

"No indeed, I wouldn't," said Ben, with a hearty shake of his head. "But the truth was I didn't have a heart for any work, and somehow I wanted to be near where I could see the ships come in. But I don't owe him no twenty dollars for grub and lodging."

"Did you ever spend a cent in his house?"

"Yes, sir. I have treated some of my old mates, but I paid him right down. As for

lodging, you will say, when you see my little house, that I don't need to go to the saloon to find a bed."

"Then I wouldn't pay him a cent. Don't you go near him again. He is worse than I ever thought him. He's a land-shark. But, Ben, I don't believe that Barlow had anything to do with my father's disappearance."

"No more do I; but the question is, who did? If it hadn't been for what Barlow said when he thought I was asleep I should think the cap'n was dead; but he says he is liable to come back when nobody isn't expecting him. I tell you, that proves something."

"It certainly does," said Bob, becoming excited. "I will see Mr. Gibbons about it this afternoon."

"That's what I say. That man can see through it, if anybody can. Barlow says it is no concern of his; but I'll bet if he is brought up before a court of law he'll have to tell something he don't want to."

Bob became all life and animation now. The idea that Barlow might tell something that was no concern of his made him impa-

tient to see a lawyer and find out what he thought about it. The Mr. Gibbons of whom Bob had spoken was an old-time friend of his father's, and he was sure that if there was a flaw in the will that gentleman would find it out.

Meanwhile the carriage sped on, and in a few moments drew up in front of Ben's house. It was a small place, surrounded by about half an acre of ground, and so hemmed in by bushes and trees that one could scarcely see it from the road. The garden occupied almost all Ben's attention. It was only when he grew lonesome and longed for his old captain that he went down to Barlow's, to be where he could see the vessels come in, and he never spent any money there except what he was able to "pay right down." His story that Ben was indebted to him was made up all out of his own head.

"So this is where you live?" said Bob, after the trunks had been carried in on the porch and the hackman discharged. "It seems to me that you ought to be contented here."

"I am," replied Ben. "I call this my 'ordinary,' for I have never been satisfied to live here only until my cap'n comes back. I believe now that he is alive, and that some day I'll see his old gray head coming in here. My gracious! wouldn't that be fine?"

"I tell you it would," said Bob, seating himself in the nearest chair, "but I am most afraid of it. Any way, we'll make Barlow tell what he knows. Now, what have you got for dinner? I have not had a bite to eat since I have been at my uncle's."

"Well, you go in and start a fire in the stove and I'll soon have dinner ready for you. You will find everything arranged there as it used to be in the Anchorage."

Bob went into the house, and Ben bent his steps for the garden to gather some fresh vegetables for dinner. The Anchorage was the name Watson had applied to the house Captain Nellis had given him because he thought he wasn't going to move any more. He thought he was going to live and die under that roof. When Mr. Layton told the old fellow that he was done with his services, Ben

was almost heart-broken. He tried to argue the point with that gentleman, but when the latter told him that he had hired negroes to take the places of all the house-servants, Ben had nothing more to say.

"Niggers!" he said in disgust. "I can remember the time, and it was not so very long ago, when the niggers were slaves and glad to take what they could get, and now they come around and crowd a white man out of his place. This house won't stand a great while."

Bob started a fire in the stove, and that was easy enough, for everything was handy, and then went into the bedroom to examine things there. His bunk was nicely made up on the side opposite Ben's, as if the old fellow had been expecting him that very night. All the war relics were there, too, which Bob had not been able to find room for in his apartments at home, including a model of the rebel iron-clad Atlanta, just as she appeared on the day that Ben helped sink her.

"I almost believe I am in the old room at the Anchorage," said Bob. "There is one thing sure: Barlow will have a time getting

at me here to shanghai me. I'd like to see him try it. And to think that my cousin should uphold him in such a trick! I tell you, that beats me."

Bob put some more wood on the fire and then went out on the porch to wait for Ben. He was so long in coming that finally Bob got impatient and strolled through the bushes to meet him. The way he took led him to the beach, and almost the first thing he saw was the ten-ton schooner in which he had taken so much delight in going fishing and exploring the inlets of the bay. He had so many things to think of that he had forgotten all about her until he caught sight of her. It did not seem possible that his father would have taken his schooner away from him, even if he had made a codicil to his will, and he determined to speak to Mr. Gibbons about it that very afternoon.

"It is bad enough to have taken my horses without saying a word to me, but I didn't believe he would so far forget himself as to take my schooner," said Bob, seating himself upon the grass. "If he had only left me that and

the ponies I should have been satisfied—that is, if he is dead; but that is something I won't believe until I receive proof of it. Now, then, what has become of Ben?"

Barlow's chance words, that it was no concern of his what he had seen on that stormy morning, had put Bob on his mettle, but for all that, he was not inclined to put faith in anything that man said or did; consequently he was disposed to make the best of a bad bargain. He had all along supposed that his father was dead, but the hint Barlow had thrown out that he might turn up again when nobody was expecting him worked a change in Bob in spite of all he could do to prevent it. But he intended to wait until he could see Mr. Gibbons about it.

"I won't put any confidence in what that old land-shark said," soliloquized Bob, stretching himself out flat on the grass. "If Mr. Gibbons says he is alive I will believe it; and if he says he is dead, I shall believe that, too. I will think no more about it. I am ready for anything that happens. There's Ben; he has been to town. I object to his

going on in this way in regard to me; but first I am going to speak about that boat. Say," he added, rising to his feet and taking some of the parcels from the old sailor, "do you see that boat over there?"

"Yes; and I know it's your'n."

"It ought not to have been taken away from me, ought it?"

"No; nor your ponies, either."

"That's all right. I shall speak to Mr. Gibbons about it this afternoon. Now, Ben, what made you go to town? Don't you know that I can live on the grub that you do?"

"Say, Bob," replied the sailor, who did not care to argue this point, "you haven't had any scouse or dough-boy lately, have you? Well, now, you just sit down in that chair and watch me get them ready for you. I'll have them ready while you are thinking about it."

Ben enforced the order by pushing Bob into the nearest chair, while he went on dishing up the scouse and dough-boy. While Ben worked he talked about almost everything else than the subject that was upper-

most in Bob's mind, and when at last the dinner was ready they sat down to it with most ravenous appetites. They took their time, and it was nearly an hour before they had got all they wanted, and when the dishes had been washed and put away, Bob announced that he was going to see a lawyer.

"You don't want to let grass grow under your feet," said Ben. "Go and see him at once and have the matter settled. It's my opinion that there is something in that codicil that will benefit you."

Bob closed the gate behind him, and with long and earnest strides took his way to the lawyer's office. Of course he met many persons along the road who had not seen him before, and they all wanted to stop and shake him by the hand; but Bob thought there was a little sadness mixed with it all. They would have felt a great deal better if they knew that he was the heir to his father's property.

"Everybody in town seems to feel that way," soliloquized Bob, as he ran up the steps that led to the lawyer's office. "I don't know but I am the heir, after all."

Pushing open the door of the lawyer's office, he found the gentleman of whom he was in search alone. He had his feet elevated upon his desk and was examining some legal documents. When he saw who his visitor was he got up from his chair and greeted him with cordiality.

"Why, Bob, how are you?" he exclaimed. "I heard you had come home, but I didn't expect to see you. Sit down."

"Are you quite alone?" inquired Bob, accepting the proffered hand.

"I am all alone. Did you want to see me?"

"Yes. And I wish you would lock your door, so that no one can come in to bother us. I wish to have a few moments' conversation with you."

The lawyer's face fell. He knew that Bob had come there to see him about the will. He locked the door and sat down and looked at Bob without speaking.

"You used to have a good deal to do with my father's business during his lifetime, Mr. Gibbons?" began Bob.

"I had a great deal to do with it until he got that rascally brother-in-law of his to take my place," replied Mr. Gibbons.

"Do you call him rascally?" inquired Bob.

"Yes; and so would anybody else. You ought to be the heir to the property your father left, and I know it."

"Well, is he dead? That's what I want to know."

"I am sorry to say that there's no doubt about that," said Mr. Gibbons, gazing thoughtfully out of the window. "Everything goes to prove it. It was an awful stormy night on the bay, and the next morning in came his boat, half-filled with water. His hat was lying loose in the boat, and two or three days afterward his fish-pole was picked up. Oh, there's no doubt about his being dead."

"Did they find the body?"

"Why, no. It was probably swept out to sea."

"Is there any way in which I can contest the will?"

"Did you sign a paper?" asked the lawyer.

"Yes, I signed some sort of a paper, but I

was in such a flurry that I didn't take time to examine it. The lawyer that was with him told me that it was just a form."

"Who was it?"

"I don't know who it was. He was a stranger to me."

The lawyer got up and searched his desk for some paper that he was anxious to find. Presently he brought out a document entitled, "Notice for Probate of Will." Holding the paper in his hand he pointed to a note printed in smaller letters, and said:

"Did you sign such a thing as this: 'I hereby accept full service and waive all time of Notice of the within Citation.' Did you sign that?"

"It seems to me that I did; but I would not be positive."

"And the lawyer told you that it was a mere form? And when he got you back at school your uncle put these papers in to probate, and after that he had you just where he wanted you."

"That is just about the way of it, I guess."

"Bob, you are the most confiding boy I

ever saw. You ought not to have signed that citation. You have put it out of your power to contest the will. You ought to have a guardian appointed for you."

This was a very unwelcome piece of news to Bob, but he did not rebel against it. He knew that the lawyer was in a situation to understand such matters better than he was.

"I am sorry, but I can see no other way than for you to accept the situation," said Mr. Gibbons. "By the way, what sort of a penman is that uncle of yours?"

"He writes a very poor hand, but I can make out to read it. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, nothing, but I just happened to think of it. You haven't seen a copy of the will, have you? Well, I will have a copy here tomorrow, and you can see what your father says in that codicil. I know he didn't intend to take away everything you had."

"Then he wouldn't have taken away my boat?"

"Certainly not. Nor your ponies, either."

"Do you think I would be doing wrong if

I should go down there and run my boat up to Ben's house, where I am living now?"

"Of course not," replied the lawyer, glad to bring the interview to a close. "I will go with you."

Mr. Gibbons put on his hat, and together they started toward the place where the boat was moored. It was on the beach opposite an old fisherman's shanty, and when they arrived there they were gratified to find the man sitting on the bench beside the door, enjoying his pipe. He was delighted to see Bob. He remembered that, just before he started to school, he had given the old fisherman a few pieces of silver, with instructions to keep an eye on his schooner, and had always found everything all right about her when he returned.

"The top of the morning to you, Mister Bob," said the man, extending his hand. "The schooner is all right and tight. Be you wanting her this morning?"

"There hasn't been anybody aboard of her since I left?" said Bob.

"Nary soul," answered the man. "She's

yours, and Gus Layton ain't got no business with her."

"I guess it's all right, Bob," said Mr. Gibbons, turning away. "You can take her home with you. Remember, I shall have a copy of that will to-morrow. Good-bye."

"Say, Mister Bob, is it true that old Layton has got all of your property?" said the old fisherman, whose name was Oakes. "I think it's a mighty mean piece of business. Do you want to go off to her? Jump into my boat. I'll get the key to the cabin."

"I don't think I am doing right until I see the codicil," said Bob, hesitatingly. "If father thought I could have her, well and good; if he didn't, I wouldn't touch her."

"Who's going to have her, then?" exclaimed Oakes. "Not your cousin, I bet you. I've seen him since he come back, driving your ponies around, and I tell you I wanted to take them away from him. Get into the boat and I will soon set you aboard. Where are you living now; up to Ben's? Then there's nothing to hinder you from taking her right up there."

Mr. Oakes got the key to the cabin, and, seizing Bob by the arm, was gently forcing him into the boat when a loud shout came to their ears. The two looked up and saw Hank Lufkin coming toward them. He was a boy who stood well in that community, although he was nothing but a market-shooter. His clothes were patched, but aside from that he looked as neat as a new pin. Rumor said he didn't get along very smoothly when he was at home, and perhaps you will know the reason when we say that his father was a lazy, do-nothing sort of fellow, and every cent Hank made he had to hide, for fear his father would get hold of it. His mother kept an account of all his earnings, while his father was obliged to live from hand to mouth, spending such sums as he could make by sawing wood about the village. If he had owned a boat he would have been all right, for then he would have gone a-fishing; but every day he was obliged to stand on shore and watch other men when they returned with the cargoes which they had gathered from their nets—men no better than he was, he often de-

clared—and of course he did not feel very jubilant over it. And right there was what was the matter with Mr. Lufkin; he was jealous of anybody who held a position he could not hold himself, but he never thought of going to work to better his own condition.

“I am just as good as they are,” said Mr. Lufkin to his wife, “and I’ll bet you that nobody gives me a boat.”

“Why, those men had to earn their boats,” said his wife. “If you would just throw off your coat and go to work you could soon have one.”

“Work! I might work till I am gray-headed, and I wouldn’t be nearer a boat than I am now. Mark my words: I’ll have a boat before another year passes over my head.”

This was the kind of a man that Hank Lufkin lived with, and of course his life was not a happy one. Hank did not own a boat, but he had an old-fashioned single-barreled gun with which he managed to kill a few squirrels and quails, and by sitting for long hours on the end of the pier he often succeeded in catching a string of flounders which the

neighbors were always willing to buy; but Hank was not satisfied. He wanted a boat as bad as his father did, but he was willing to work to earn it. Just now his prospects were rather dim. There hadn't been much shooting lately, and the fish seemed to have gone somewhere else; so Hank didn't have much to do, and he was ready to go with Bob anywhere he wanted to sail, for Hank knew Bob well. He always made some money when he went fishing with him.

"Halloo, Hank!" exclaimed Bob, as he came up. "Are you very busy? Then get in with me and help me navigate this schooner up the bay."

Hank was just waiting for this invitation, and, besides, he had something he wanted to show to Bob and ask him what he thought about it. He shook hands with him and got into the boat, picked up an oar and pulled off to the Curlew, for that was the name by which Bob's ten-ton schooner was known.

CHAPTER X.

A TWO-HUNDRED-DOLLAR PEARL.

“**I** TELL you, she looks natural!” exclaimed Bob, as a few swift strokes with the oars brought him alongside the schooner. “I believe I’ll hold out in the bay for a little while. Mr. Oakes, can you go?”

“No; I have got to fix up my nets for to-morrow’s fishing,” replied the fisherman. “There’s a stiff breeze blowing, and she will take you out all right. There’s the cabin,” he added, as he unlocked the doors; “step in and see if there’s anything missing.”

Bob laughed and went in, declaring that it would be a mighty slick thief who could take anything out of that cabin while it was under such care. The cabin needed airing, so the windows were opened; after that the sails were cast loose, Mr. Oakes stepped into his boat and wished them a pleasant voyage,

Hank undid the fastenings, Bob seated himself in the stern, and as soon as the canvas felt the full force of the wind she took a big bone in her teeth and went bowling along toward the entrance of the bay. Bob thought of the many times his father had sat in that boat, giving him instructions in regard to sailing her, or telling him some stories of the sea, and a mist gathered in front of his eyes.

"I don't wonder that you feel lonely," said Hank, who readily divined the thoughts that were passing in Bob's mind. "Did your father not leave you anything besides the schooner?"

"I can't tell whether or not he left me the schooner until I see the codicil," said Bob, sadly. "The way it looks now he has left me out in the cold. I am taking this without saying a word to my uncle about it. But I don't mean to give it up. Father gave me the money to buy the boat, and I had it made to order."

"Then it is yours," said Hank.

"I expect Gus will come after it as soon as he finds out that I have it, and how I

shall keep him from getting it I don't know," said Bob. "I wish I could get my ponies."

"So do I. I tell you it made me mad to see him driving around with those kid gloves and going to that saloon. What did he go there for?"

"He had some business with Barlow, I suppose," said Bob, who had not yet got into the way of telling Hank everything he wanted to know. "Now, Hank, what have you been doing since I have been gone? Have you made your fortune?"

"No, I haven't," said Hank, looking out over the sea. "Father goes sometimes for a month without doing any work at all, and then he wants some money and he goes to mother for it. If I had a hundred dollars he would soon get it away."

"What makes your mother let him know she has any money?"

"She can't help it. He looks at what comes on the table and makes his calculations from that. I tell you father is a sharp one. But I have something I want to show you," said Hank, thrusting his hand into his pocket

and hauling out a parcel carefully wrapped up in several pieces of paper. "I carried it loose in my pocket until I went hunting with a man from Baltimore, and I showed it to him. He offered me five dollars for it, and furthermore he seemed so determined to have it that it was all I could do to take it away from him. That made me think that if it was worth five dollars it was worth more, and so I wrapped it up, being resolved to show it to you and Leon Sprague. Now tell me if I made a mistake in not taking five dollars for it."

Bob gave up the wheel to Hank, took the parcel, and found inside of it a fresh-water pearl about the size of a pea. Bob didn't know anything about pearls. He was acquainted with the fact that where they were found it was necessary to dry the oysters in order to discover them, and that a teacupful of them was worth a hundred thousand dollars, and he didn't think this pearl of Hank's was worth much.

"It is as clear as crystal, isn't it?" said Bob, holding it up to the light. "Where did you find it?"

“On a little stream up here,” replied Hank ; “and there are more of them there, too. But I see very plainly by your looks that I made a mistake in not accepting five dollars for it.”

“You mustn’t judge anything by me,” replied Bob, hastily, “because I don’t know what it is worth. Let me have it and I will ask the jeweller. He will know something about it.”

“Oh, he will laugh at me. The idea of asking him what a fresh-water pearl is worth !”

“He needn’t know that you found it at all. I will say that I found it and want to know what it is worth.”

“Well, under those circumstances you may take it; but you may make up your mind to be laughed at.”

Bob folded up the pearl and put it into his pocket, and told himself that unless he had shot wide of the mark Hank’s find was worth ten or fifteen dollars at least. He had never heard of pearls being found so far south. He knew that there were some in New Jersey, and some others in Wisconsin, that they were being worked at the rate of twenty-five thou-

sand dollars each year, and he didn't see why it was that pearls were not found further south. In that case Hank's fortune was made, for he was the only one who knew where the pearls were, provided some one else did not suspect him—his father, for instance—and watch him to see where he went and what he did to increase his income.

"You say there are plenty more pearls where this one came from?" said Bob at length.

"Why, I have seen as many as twenty-five or thirty scattered along the banks of that creek, but I never thought to look at them, for I did not think they were worth any money," replied Hank. "This one was found out in plain sight, and so I took it up and put it into my pocket."

"Well, I just want to tell you that you had better keep mum in regard to these pearls. If they turn out valuable you want them all yourself, don't you?"

"I should say so. There's nobody needs them worse than I do."

"You just keep still until I see the jeweller,"

said Bob. "It may be that your fortune is made."

"Oh, I don't hope for that. If I can make ten dollars out of that one you have in your pocket, well and good. I don't know that I can find the others, anyway."

"Well, you can try, can't you?"

Yes, Hank was satisfied that he could do that, and he wouldn't take anybody with him to show them where the pearls were except Leon Sprague and Bob Nellis.

In half an hour Bob had enjoyed as much of a sail as he wanted to, so he brought the Curlew about and headed her toward the low wooden pier that had been there when Ben bought the place. The man who lived in that house had a sailboat, with buoy and anchor all complete, and Ben, who stood upon the bank and saw Bob coming, stepped into this light skiff and pulled out to where the buoy was. He waved his hands to Bob to show him that he was near the anchorage, and in a few minutes the schooner rounded to with her sails shaking in the wind. The boat drew so much water that of course she had to ride where she

would be free of every obstacle. If a storm had come up she would have pounded herself to pieces on the wharf.

"I've got her, Ben!" shouted Bob. "Now we'll see what sort of work Gus will go through to get her back. Mr. Oakes said he shouldn't have her, anyway."

"Gus will not try to get her back," said Ben, pulling up to the bow to be in readiness to take the anchor-rope when Hank passed it down to him, "and I guess he will give up the ponies as well. What did Mr. Gibbons say about the codicil?"

"Father is dead, Ben. There are no two ways about that."

"Did you tell him what Barlow said—that it was no concern of his what he saw on that stormy morning?"

"No, I didn't."

"Well, why didn't you? You ain't worth a cent to go to see a lawyer. The next time I send you on such an errand I'll go myself."

"I really wish you would, Ben. He knocked everything out of my head by saying that father was dead, and so I didn't think

of half I wanted to say to him. Now, Hank, make the sails fast, as they were before. I don't believe that Gus will be willing to leave the boat here, and I'll just take the tiller ashore with me."

Ben had by this time climbed aboard the schooner, and under his skilful management the sails were neatly stowed away, after which he closed and fastened the cabin windows, locked the door, and gave the key to Bob. The schooner was all right now for anything that might come up, and they got into Ben's skiff, and in a few minutes were put safely on the wharf. Hank took leave of them and was about to go away when Bob called to him.

"Here, Hank, I don't want you to do this for nothing," he said, putting his hand into his pocket.

"Do you suppose I am going to take pay for the first sailboat ride I have had for many a day?" said Hank. "Keep that until the first time I go fishing with you. Good-bye."

"I didn't tell him that we have had noth-

ing but bread and tea for the last four or five days, and that I am getting awful tired of that style of living. But then Bob isn't worth as much as he used to be, and I don't believe in bothering him. Dear me, I wish that pearl would be worth fifteen dollars at least. I tell you, it wouldn't take me long to get something for mother to eat," he said to himself as he closed the gate behind him and started for the place he called home. "But I shall have no such luck as that. I've got to work for every cent I get."

"Now, Ben," said Bob, when Hank had passed out of hearing, "I am going down town."

"I guess you had better keep away from there," said Ben, slowly shaking his head. "A boy who will go to town as you did—"

"I know all about that; but then I can speak to Mr. Gibbons about it to-morrow. You can go with me, if you like."

"No; I believe I'll stay and work in the garden. I've been neglecting it of late, and now that I have got two to provide for I think I had better bestow some attention on it.

You're sure you ain't a-going to see that lawyer again?"

"Not until to-morrow. Good-bye!"

"I am going as straight to that jeweller as I can go," he soliloquized. "I have been thinking a good deal about this pearl, and I don't see why it shouldn't be worth money, seeing that they make so much out of them in Wisconsin. At any rate, I'm going to ask him."

Bob met many friends he knew on the street, and was obliged to stop and shake hands with them, but in due time he reached the jeweller's store. He found the jeweller there, but he was engaged in waiting upon somebody who was a stranger to him; but he shook hands with Bob, and said he would attend to him in a few minutes, so Bob had nothing to do but look around the store. The stranger was satisfied at last, and then the man turned to him and wanted to know when he had returned.

"I came this morning," said Bob. "But that isn't what I came to see you about. Here's a fresh-water pearl that came from a

little stream, and I would like to know what it is worth."

"It isn't worth much," said the jeweller, as he watched Bob undoing the parcel. "I've had to pass upon a heap of such things as that, and the best of them are not worth more than a dollar or two. Why, Bob," he added, as he took the pearl and held it up to the light, "where did you get this? I tell you, that is a beauty!"

"Is that worth more than a dollar or two?" asked Bob.

"Well, I should say so!" exclaimed the jeweller. "It is worth two hundred dollars at least."

Bob was amazed.

"You never found this," said the jeweller, looking at Bob in surprise. "Where did you get it?"

"No, I didn't find it, that's a fact," said Bob; who then went on, under a pledge of secrecy, to repeat everything that Hank had said to him. "I brought it here because he was afraid you would laugh at him, and Hank don't like to be laughed at."

“Well, I guess I shouldn’t have laughed at him. Are there any more where this came from?”

“Hank says there are from twenty-five to thirty there, but he didn’t suppose they were worth any money, and so he never stopped to pick them up. Two hundred dollars! You are sure you haven’t made a mistake?”

“No, indeed. It is worth more than that, but I can’t tell how much more until I send it away. That boy’s fortune is made. Twenty-five more at two hundred dollars! His father can loaf now just as long as he pleases. He will never have to work again. You don’t know the stream where this came from?”

“No, and if I did I shouldn’t tell.”

“That’s all right. I don’t ask you to go back on Hank, for he is too good a boy; but you can tell him for me that he needn’t go shooting any more. Do you want to sell this?”

“Of course I do. It is of no use to me.”

“I will give you two hundred dollars, cash money, for it. Mind, I do not say that is all it’s worth. I shall have to send this to New

York, and if they pay me any more for it I will give him half what I get."

"That is very kind of you, Mr. Vollar," said Bob. "If you will give me the money I will take it and give it to Hank. I wish you could go with me. You will see an astonished fellow when I give him the proceeds."

"I'd like to, but I can't leave just now, for I am very busy. You bring him here, and I'll see how he acts."

"I will. I'll bring him here to thank you. He didn't think that pearl of his was worth more than fifteen dollars. But two hundred dollars! I believe it will take his breath away."

The jeweller was busy with his safe, during which he counted out the money, which he handed over to Bob. The latter took it, and left the store with a much lighter heart than when he had gone into it. He felt rich, for Hank was a particular friend of his, and he was interested in everything he did.

"Now the next question is, how am I going to keep his father from knowing anything about it?" said Bob, as he hurried along.

“Of course he has the right to take every cent Hank earns, but I don’t mean that he shall know he has earned this much. He would go to that stream and gather every pearl there was to be found, and then what would Hank do? If the old man is at home I will pull Hank off on one side.”

It was quite a long walk to Hank’s house, and when he reached it Bob could not help saying to himself what a nice place it could have been made if Hank’s father had been possessed of a little more energy; for Mr. Lufkin had been better off in the world, but the war left him penniless, and he was too lazy to go to work and earn more. If it had not been for his wife he would have gone supperless to bed many a night. She washed clothes and did mending for neighbors who were better off; and some days, when she got home with her money in her pocket, it all went to buy that ragamuffin a pair of new trousers or a new shirt. Hank never asked for any. He made what he earned by the hardest of knocks; and more than once, when he told his mother that he had supper, he hadn’t

had a bite since morning. While he was thinking of all these things Bob arrived at Mr. Lufkin's gate. Hank was sitting there on the porch with his father, and his face was as long as your arm. He brightened up when he saw Bob approaching, and straight-way came down to the gate to meet him.

"Halloo, Hank!" exclaimed Bob. "I want you to go fishing with me to-morrow. How do you do, Mr. Lufkin."

The latter took his pipe from his mouth long enough to say "Howdy," and went on with his smoking. He was the only one about the village that didn't think enough of Bob to shake his hand.

"Come on down the road apiece," continued Bob, "and I will talk to you about what I want you to do to-morrow."

"Your lines are all up at your father's, I suppose," said Hank. "I can furnish you with some—"

"Oh, bother the fish-lines," said Bob, sinking his voice to a whisper. "I didn't come here to talk to you about them. I have been down to the jeweller's."

"And did you take that pearl along?" inquired Hank.

Bob winked his eye.

"How much did he give you for it?"

"Guess," said Bob.

"Ten dollars."

"Good gracious, man. You must think your find is valuable. Guess again."

"Didn't he give you but five? Well, I might have known it. I don't meet with any such luck as some folks do."

"You're doing so good at guessing suppose you guess again," said Bob, smiling; and there was something in the way he spoke that made Hank open his eyes. "You began at ten dollars; now suppose you begin there and go the other way."

"Did he give you twenty dollars for it?"

"He came down a little heavier than that," said Bob.

"Did he give you forty?" said Hank.

"Well, no. He gave me more than that."

"Look here, Bob, I want to know how much that man gave you. Did he give you a hundred?"

"Yes, he gave me more than that," said Bob, paying no attention to Hank's expression of bewilderment. "Let's go into the bushes here, beside the road. No one can see us there, and I will give you the money."

Hank was so excited that he could scarcely stand still. He followed Bob into the bushes, and the latter drew out the money and handed it to him. It was all in small bills, and made a pretty tolerable-sized package. Hank took it in amazement. He ran his fingers over the bills, and when he saw the fives and tens scattered through the bundle he couldn't talk.

"It's all yours," said Bob, heartily enjoying the sight; "and he said that if there are more of them up there your fortune is made."

"Did—did he give you all this?" faltered Hank.

"He certainly did, and it did not take him two minutes to decide upon the worth of the thing. He said it is worth more than that, but he couldn't tell until he had sent it to New York; and whatever they give him in advance of that he will give you half. I tell you, old fellow, your shooting is about over."

"Well, I am beaten!" said Hank, when he had in some measure recovered his wits. "Ever since father came home from the Confederate army we have been living from hand to mouth, you may say, and I never supposed my luck would take such a turn as this. Bob, I am ever so much obliged to you, and you must come around some time, when father isn't here, to let mother thank you."

"That's all right," said Bob. "But you looked awful downhearted when I went to your house just now. What was the trouble?"

"Father was scolding me because I didn't ask some money of you when I went out to take that sailboat ride," answered Hank, looking down at the ground. "I told him that you were as hard up as we were, and he wouldn't listen to it."

"I am, and that's a fact."

"You see he is hard pressed for a pair of shoes, the ones he now wears being so far gone that they let his feet out on the ground."

"Then let him go to work. The idea of

his laying around and doing nothing! I will find him a job of sawing wood to-morrow morning."

"But he don't want that. He wants to have money coming in when he isn't doing anything to earn it."

"Oh, that's the trouble, is it? Well, he'll wait a long time before he finds that day. Now, Hank, you want to put that money where he won't get it."

"I know it, and I want you to take charge of it. Give me ten dollars to buy a good supper for mother, and do what you please with the balance."

"Well, suppose you come around to Ben's house in the morning, and I will go to the bank with you and put it there. It is too late now, for the bank is closed. You can trust your mother that far, can't you?"

"Oh, yes. As long as she has not got the money in her possession it is all right. It is all mine, isn't it? I never thought I should have so much money of my own."

"It is all yours if you don't let your father get it away from you," said Bob, handing out

the bill which Hank had asked for. "You must keep it away from him, at all events."

"And that is going to be a harder job than you imagine," said Hank, as he walked with Bob toward town. "He watches everything that comes on the table, and he knows in a minute when I have got any money."

"Tell him I gave you this to pay you for going fishing with me. I hope I shall be somewhere one of these days where I will not have to tell so many lies. Good-bye. Remember and come in the morning about nine o'clock. In the afternoon I have to see a lawyer."

Hank promised to be on hand, and the two separated, one to go in and throw old Ben Watson into an ecstasy of bewilderment and delight when he heard of Hank's lucky find, and the other to pass on to town to purchase a good supper for his mother.

CHAPTER XI.

LEON'S WAR RECORD.

EVERYBODY in town knew Hank, and everybody felt sorry for him, too. He and his mother were obliged to work so hard, and his father, presuming on his war record, did nothing but loaf. He had been wounded three times while in the service, but that did not hurt him any, and Mr. Sprague had threatened to arrest him and put him where he would be obliged to do something; but his wife and Hank always stood in the way. It would have mortified them beyond measure to have Mr. Lufkin sent to the workhouse, and Mr. Sprague didn't know what else to do with him.

It took Hank a long time to purchase his supply of provisions, there were so many things he wanted which he was obliged to let alone; but at last he started homeward with a full basket on each arm. Among other things

he had purchased a pair of new shoes for his mother—she needed shoes almost as badly as her husband—and he had two dollars left. He knew right where they would go.

“Father is bound to have what is left, and I can’t hinder him from taking it,” he said, as he put his baskets down in a doorway to rest. “I shan’t resist at all when he asks for it. If I was satisfied that this would be the last time he would ask me for it, he could take it and welcome; but it won’t be. He’ll be after me for some plug-tobacco, and I have already spent as much money for that as I can afford. But two hundred dollars! I’m going to take mother’s breath away when I tell her that.”

When Hank drew near to his home he couldn’t see anybody, but the sound of a loud voice coming from the inside, his father’s voice, told him that his mother had returned from her day’s washing. His father was angry about something, for his stentorian voice was raised so high in his excitement that it could have been heard across the street, while his mother answered in a mild tone, which seemed to increase the man’s fury.

“Why didn’t you get it?” he heard his father ask, as he unlatched the gate. “Here I am going around barefooted, and you are making a sight of money by washing. I tell you I don’t want to go around this way any longer.”

“The woman was not at home when I left,” said Mrs. Lufkin. “And supposing I do get the money, what good will it do you? It amounts to only one dollar, and you can’t get a pair of shoes for less than two.”

“Well, if you ain’t got any money how am I to get things to eat? I can’t live on nothing.”

“I am sure I don’t know. The tea is gone, the bread is pretty nearly gone, and what we are to do I don’t know. There was a man inquiring about you to-day. He says he can easily give you a job in the hay-field, if you are willing to go to work.”

“But I tell you I can’t work. This wound in my side bothers me more than I can tell. I wish that fellow had it. I tell you he would give that hay-field a wide berth.”

This was all that Hank heard of the confab

between husband and wife, for just then the gate clicked and he went merrily up the porch with his two baskets on his arm. He walked into the room and placed them on the table.

"There, mother," said he. "You'll find grub enough in those baskets to last you three or four days. When that is gone I can easily get more."

"Why, Henry, how did you make so much money?" exclaimed his mother in surprise.

"Bob Nellis gave it to me," replied Hank.

"How much did he give you?" asked his father.

"Ten dollars."

"And all for doing nothing!" exclaimed Mr. Lufkin. "I think I heard you say that Bob is about as hard up as we are. His giving away ten to you looks like it."

"Well, he gave it to me, anyway," said Hank. "I suppose he has a right to do what he pleases with his own. The money was in his hands, and so he gave it to me."

"I would have gone with him for five, and I could show him some places where he could

catch fish," snarled Mr. Lufkin, who did not see that Hank was trying to get around the question without telling a lie. "You always seem to be making money, and I never see you do anything. You must have some of this ten dollars left?"

"Yes, sir, and there it is."

Hank felt in his pocket and drew out the two dollars, which he placed in his father's palm. Mr. Lufkin was surprised, and so was his mother. They had never seen Hank so willing to part with money before.

"Is this all you have got?" asked Mr. Lufkin.

"Yes, sir, that's all. If you don't believe me you can search me."

This little incident will suffice to show that his father was not above going through his son's clothes to find his money. Hank had seen him do it often, and he knew that his father had searched his mother's clothing also.

"I'll take your word for it," said his father; "but it beats me how you can make so much money catching fish when you never catch any. I reckon I had best go down town now.

You'll have supper ready by the time I get back, Molly?"

"Oh, yes, I'll have supper by that time," said his wife, who, when she had got through admiring her new shoes, turned her attention to the other things in the baskets. "Henry has a good many things here that don't need cooking."

Mr. Lufkin put on his hat and walked out of the house with the air of a man who had a million dollars in his pocket. It always made him feel big to know that he had some money, even though he did not make it himself. Hank watched him go through the gate, and finally went out and leaned over it to make sure that he had gone, and at last he went back to his mother.

"He is safely out of sight now, and I want you to come here and listen to me for a few minutes," said Hank, taking the groceries out of her hand and laying them on the table. "Oh, I haven't been doing any harm, you can rest assured of that; but that pearl you saw me have was worth two hundred dollars."

Paying no attention to his mother's expressions of astonishment, Hank went on and gave her a full history of the pearl and of his interview with Bob Nellis, and ended with Bob's offering to take it and sell it.

"He disposed of it just before he came up here," said Hank, "but he saw father about the house, and so took me off on one side to talk to me about going fishing. He showed me the money, and I got ten dollars of him to buy groceries with."

"Do you think there are more pearls up there?" asked his mother.

"I am sure of it. I may not find them again, but they are there. I found this one lying around loose. I was just wading across the creek to get a shot at some quails I had marked down there, and saw this stone and put it into my pocket. But, goodness me! I didn't think I had made so much out of it."

"Where is the rest of the money? You will have to take mighty good care that your father don't find it out."

"Let him. The money is given into Bob's hands, and to-morrow I am going down to

put it in the bank. But here is another thing that I have just thought of. If I put it in in your name or mine, and father should find it out, then what?"

"I don't know," replied Mrs. Lufkin. "Your father would make us draw it, whether we wanted to or not."

"That's just what I was thinking of. Suppose I put it in in Bob's name? Of course I would have to go to him every time I wanted to draw any money."

"It would be better so. Bob is honest, and you could get the money from him as readily as if it was in your own name."

"And father couldn't get it. That's what I am thinking the most of. Now, mother, what shall I spend it for—a boat?"

"I don't think I would draw on this money for anything," said his mother. "You had better wait until you find some more pearls."

It was astonishing what an effect the word "money" had upon the two inmates of the house. Mrs. Lufkin, who had been so down-hearted a little while before because the tea and bread were gone, went about getting sup-

per as she had done in the days gone by, when Joe first came back from the army, and Hank sat in the doorway, where he could keep watch of his father, nursed his left leg, and talked of what those two hundred dollars might bring them, until he saw Lufkin coming briskly along the road. He felt better, for he had a pair of new shoes on.

“Halloo!” he exclaimed, when he came into the house. “Supper is ready, ain’t it? I am in just the right humor to tackle it. I haven’t had anything fit to eat since I came back from the army, nor before, either, I might say. Just before we surrendered up there to Richmond we didn’t have nothing but corn to eat, and a man mighty soon gets tired of that. Grant furnished us with rations, and I never felt so good as I did when I filled out on them.”

Joe seated himself at the table without waiting for an invitation to do so, and straightway helped himself to two of the slices of salmon, which he proceeded to eat as though he was still serving in the army under Lee. When the supply of salmon was gone

he called for more, and when the two platesful had disappeared he got up feeling that he had enjoyed a good meal. Hank had seen the time when he was rather opposed to his father's ravenous eating, but he didn't mind it now. He filled a cob-pipe with some tobacco, unwrapped his old shoes, threw them down on the floor for his wife to pick up, and seated himself in the doorway, prepared to enjoy a paper which was a week old. He read the advertisements and everything else that was in print, until his eyes rested on an article that instantly riveted his attention. He read it over several times, and then rested his paper on his knee, leaned back against the side of the house, and went off into a brown study. The article referred to ran as follows:

“A PIRATICAL PROGNOSIS.

“A tramp is represented as musing thus at Elberon: ‘I suppose that in the cottages between here and the West End, a distance of maybe a mile, there's a million dollars' worth of easily portable stuff, such as money, jewelry, silverware, fine wearing apparel and household decorations. Two policemen are on duty along that stretch of seashore.

Well, now, suppose that on some dark night a small vessel should anchor off the place, and a band of well-armed men should land in row-boats, gag the inmates, pack up the valuables, and sail away with the cargo? Doesn't it seem to you that such a raid might be made successfully? It does to me, upon my word.' The listener says he thought of this when, in a hotel parlor, he saw thousands upon thousands of dollars scintillating upon fair dancers—in their ears and hair, at their wrists, and among the trimmings of their dresses. Even in the presence of many men he thinks a gang of active and reckless robbers might have dashed into the assemblage, surprised and cowed everybody into submission by a few pistol-shots, picked handful of precious stones like berries from a bush, and scooted away before the most quickly valiant of the lazy loungers could make any effort at resistance."

This was the article that drew Joe's attention, and it impressed him so much that he pulled out his knife, cut out the piece and put it into his pocket. Then he got up and strolled down to the gate, leaned upon it, and thought about it some more.

"I don't know where Elberon is, but there's a place just like it about five miles down the bay," soliloquized Mr. Lufkin, "and if it could

be worked at Elberon, what's the reason it couldn't be worked at Middletown? There's a heap of these big Southern planters who go there to escape the hot weather, and once, when I was down there with a load of fish, I saw a woman with so much jewelry on I just wish I could have got hold of it. This is news to me, and I tell you I have got to think of it. I wonder if Bob Nellis has his boat? Hank," he added, turning about and speaking so loud that they could hear him in the house, "did Bob leave his schooner up there for Gus to take charge of?"

"No, sir. Bob's got her, and he never said nothing to his uncle about it."

"Is that the one you are going fishing in to-morrow?"

"If we go at all we shall go in her."

"Well," said Joe, who knew he ought to say something, "you won't catch any fish. I'd have gone with Bob for half what he gave you, and I'd had some beauties to show when I came back. So Bob has got his schooner," added Joe, facing about and going on with his soliloquy. "Now, if I could only find some

determined men to help me steal that schooner some dark night, and run down to Middletown and pick off those precious stones like you was pulling berries from a bush, I tell you I wouldn't do any more work. I've got something to think of now, and who knows that—by George! I believe I can do it. I'll just go down to Middletown and see how things look."

Joe Lufkin didn't sleep much that night, for he was thinking about his new scheme, and it was long after midnight before he went to bed. Whenever he stumbled upon any new thing, and it looked well to him, he was accustomed to build air-castles; and this idea of his formed the foundation for many an airy building. Hank slept soundly, and when he awoke, the first thing he thought of was his good fortune. He thought he would speak to his mother about it. She had labored long and industriously to keep the family in food and to supply her lazy husband with wearing-apparel, and now Hank thought it about time she was taking a good long rest. He waited until his father had disposed of two men's

share of the breakfast and started off, no one knew where, and Hank was busy with the dishes, when he said to his mother :

“Where are you going to-day?”

“I haven't got any place to go to,” said Mrs. Lufkin. “I thought that, seeing that we had so much money, I could take a breathing spell for a week.”

“Take two weeks,” said Hank. “It won't be any too long to enable you to get your breath. I don't see why father won't go to work. He can make as much as I can, and he wouldn't have to keep bothering me for money. I wonder if all fathers are like him?”

“No, they are not. There's Captain Nellis, for instance.”

“I tell you he was a father worth having. That boy had nothing to do but go to school, and when he came home his father was always glad to see him. What a pity it is that Bob is so low down in the world as to have to depend on his uncle for money.”

“Does his uncle give him any money?”

“I don't know, but I think he does. He is living now with old Ben Watson, and they

are just as happy as two bugs in a rug. Say, mother, I guess I will put on my good clothes to-day."

His mother did not raise any objection, and when the breakfast dishes had been washed and things put to rights about the house Hank disappeared, and when he came out again he looked very unlike the ragged boy who had gone into the bedroom a few minutes before. To have taken a single look at him, a stranger would have thought he was the son of a well-to-do man.

"I remember that I saved my money for six months to buy this suit of clothes," said Hank to himself, surveying as much of his person as he could in the little seven-by-nine looking-glass that stood in his mother's room. "How mad father was! I thought he was going to take the clothes away and pawn them; but thank goodness he has not got so low in the world as that comes to. If he should get into the way of pawning things it would be all over with us. He would have to go to the work-house, sure."

When Hank arrived at Ben's house he

found the old sailor there on the porch, together with Bob Nellis and a new-comer, Leon Sprague, whom he had not seen before since his return from school. Leon was sitting with Captain Nellis's sword unsheathed in his lap, and appeared to be listening to something old Ben was telling him, but he jumped up and greeted Hank very cordially.

"Hank, I congratulate you on your streak of good luck," said Leon. "I suppose you don't care if Bob has told me about it?"

"No, indeed. I intended to show you the pearl before it was sold, but Bob received a good price for it. I tell you, it beats me."

"It is always darkest just before daylight," said Leon. "It has been very dark with you, but now you are in a fair way to make a man of yourself. But how did you keep your father from knowing it?"

"I told him Bob had given me ten dollars to go fishing with him, and he said it was all humbug. He would have gone with him for five, and showed him where he could catch some beauties, too."

An audible smile ran around the group as

Hank said this, and Bob wanted to know why it was that Joe didn't hire a boat and catch some of those beauties. He could sell them at Middletown as fast as he could haul them in. Hank didn't answer, and Bob continued:

"We have been listening to some stories Leon was telling us about the war."

"I didn't know that Leon had been in the war," said Hank.

"Oh, yes; I was in it from the time the first gun cracked. It was only two years ago that the war closed, and I am now almost twenty-two."

"Then you have been through the same mill that father has."

"Well—no. I was in the Confederacy, but I wasn't on the Confederate side. You see, Jones county, in Mississippi, was rather a hard place to raise soldiers for the rebellion. We were most all lumbermen, and we weren't in favor of the South seceding; so when the South withdrew from the Union we held a meeting in Ellisville and got up a series of resolutions seceding from the Southern Confederacy."

"Why, would they let you do that?" exclaimed Hank, who was greatly astonished.

"They couldn't help themselves. And it was in Jeff Davis's own State, too."

"Did you have any fighting?"

"Well, we saw more than we wanted," said Leon, with a smile. "We stole wagons that were loaded down with provisions, and the deserters came in from Union and rebel sides until there were twenty thousand of us, all hid away in the swamps."

"Where did you get your money?" said old Ben, bluntly.

"I found it."

"Well, where did you find it?"

"It all came about through an old bachelor, Smith by name, who belonged to our regiment, and who seemed to take a liking to me ever since I was a little fellow," said Leon. "When he was shot he revived long enough to tell me where I would find this money, so I went there with father, when the war was over, and dug it up."

"Didn't he have any relatives to share it with him?"

“None at all. We got every cent of it—one hundred thousand dollars.”

“Whew!” whistled Bob.

“Oh, we got more than that, for gold was worth something in those days. We went there one dark and stormy night,” continued Leon, growing enthusiastic when he thought of it; “but, dark as it was, we found somebody there waiting for us. These lumbermen were just as poor as they could be, and although they were brave men when fighting for the Union, they didn’t mean to stand by and let a hundred thousand dollars go out of their county if they could help it, and I tell you we had a race with them. But we got away.”

“I declare, you have had some experience,” said Bob, “and one of these days I want to hear your story from beginning to end; but just now I have to go to the bank. Are you all ready, Hank?”

Hank was all ready, and after the Captain’s sword had been put away, the three boys put on their hats and started for town.

CHAPTER XII.

"BEN WATSON DREAMED IT ALL."

WHEN the boys arrived at the post-office Leon found some mail there for his father, so he took leave of Bob, promising to see him again that afternoon.

"Don't you forget that I told you if you wanted help to come to our house for it," said Leon. "You seem to be as happy as you want to be, living there with old Ben Watson, but there's no telling what will happen."

"I will remember, and I thank you for the assurance," said Bob. "I don't think I shall be in any danger so long as I have Ben to back me up."

Bob and Hank's first care was to go to Mr. Vollar and thank him for his kindness in regard to that pearl—paying two hundred dollars for it when he might just as well have had it for a fourth of that sum—and their

next to call at the bank and deposit Hank's money. When Bob joined his companion again he had the bank-book, with his name written across the top, which he put into his pocket.

"There!" said Hank, with a long-drawn sigh of relief. "I'd like to see father get that money."

"He won't, unless you draw it for him," said Bob.

"And mighty clear of my doing that. I think that five dollars a week will be about all that I shall ask of you."

"You can have it. Just give me a little notice, and your money will be ready for you. Now I am going up to see Mr. Gibbons. You just hang around here on the street, and I will see you when I come down."

"May good luck attend you," said Hank.

Bob ascended the stairs that led to the lawyer's office, and found that gentleman there alone. He sat in his usual way, with his feet perched on the desk, and he had a legal document in his hand; but he was looking out of the window when Bob came in.

"Halloo!" he exclaimed, in his usual cheery manner. "You are on hand, ain't you? There's the will and the codicil. I got a copy of them after you went home last night. I'm afraid it is no go. You have got your little things, such as your ponies and boat, and other articles that you can carry away with you; but as for the rest—well, read it yourself. You can get a better idea of it."

Bob took the document, and first devoted himself entirely to the reading of the will. He found that, with the exception of several sums that were made payable to the servants, the residue of the property was bequeathed to him. Even Ben Watson came in for a thousand dollars.

"Have you heard of Uncle Layton paying these amounts to the servants?" said Bob.

"I never heard a word of it," said the lawyer.

"Well, he is a mighty mean man to cheat the servants in that way. Father thought the world of the men who waited on him. Do you know where they are now?"

"Gone off to sea, I suppose. Go on and

read further. You will find that in the codicil he revokes all wills and testaments by him made, and that he speaks only of you. I declare, it makes me mad to read it."

The codicil was something our hero did not like to see. The writer referred to Bob, and said he was glad to leave him to the care of such a guardian and protector as his Uncle Layton, who would do everything in the world that was best for him.

"Uncle Layton is not my guardian at all," said Bob, astonished beyond measure. "If he is, what did he turn me away for? He just as good as told me that I had my own living to make, and that I could not stay around his house any longer."

"I expect he did not want you around," said the lawyer. "I know I should not have wanted you in sight if I had treated you so meanly."

"I never heard of such a thing. But father says I am to have my ponies and boat. He can't take them away from me."

"No; he can't take them away, no matter how much he dislikes to see you have them.

I confess that codicil bothers me more than a little," said the lawyer, who was at times so nervous that he could scarcely sit still. "It is written with a sputtering pen, such as your father always used, and I find not a letter in it that I can't find in the body of the will."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Bob.

"Why, I did not know but he had practiced on your father's hand until he got so that he could copy it exactly. Such things have been done before now."

"By George! I never thought of that! I wonder if he has been imitating my father's writing?"

"There is only one way in which you can prove it."

"And that is by bringing my father back here."

"Yes, sir, that is the way; but, Bob, I tell you that thing is not possible. Your father is dead, and we will never see him again. I wish to goodness I could tell you otherwise, but I can't."

"By the way, that reminds me of something Barlow said. He declared that it was no con-

cern of his what he saw, but he can prove that my father isn't dead. He saw some things on that stormy morning that he won't tell to anybody."

"Do you know what they were?" demanded Mr. Gibbons, greatly astonished.

"He said he wouldn't tell them to anybody, much less to me. Now, I think if he were brought before a court of law he would have to tell it; don't it look that way to you?"

"Well, I guess it does. But don't you think it was a blind? He may have said a good many things that he can't prove."

"No, I don't think it was. He told it to my cousin. I don't mind telling you, Mr. Gibbons, that Barlow had a scheme made up to kidnap Ben and me, and send us to sea on board the Smart."

"Why, you don't tell me!" exclaimed the lawyer, growing more amazed.

"Yes, sir; that's his way of doing business. It is his way of making up a crew. He was in a fair way to make a prisoner of Ben. He set his bull-dog and his barkeeper at him, but Ben laid them both out; and just as Barlow

grabbed a chair and stepped up to hit Ben with it, Mr. Sprague came in and put a stop to it."

"Well, that beats me! Why didn't he have them arrested?"

"His son urged him not to do it. He evidently thought it best to consult a lawyer first. But I wish I could have my ponies. Mr. Gibbons, suppose you go up there and get them for me."

"Well, I'll do it; and perhaps I shall be able to tell whether or not your Uncle Layton has had any hand in this business. If he has, I think he will show it. Now, Bob, you must give me plenty of time to look into this matter. Do you want any money?"

"Why, no, sir, since I get a hundred dollars a month from Uncle Layton for keeping away from his house. That sounds as though you expected my father to come back."

"I don't know whether I do or not," said Mr. Gibbons, shaking his head. "I don't know what to make of his way of kidnapping you. If the will is all right, why should he be so anxious to be rid of you? So your uncle

gives you a hundred dollars a month. I suppose you take it?"

"Of course I do. It is mine."

"Well, it looks suspicious."

"To my mind there are many things that look suspicious, and that is one of them. You may take all the time you want. I won't come near you again until I get notice from you," said Bob, putting on his hat. "You will go up now and get those ponies?"

"I'll not delay a moment," said the lawyer, rising to his feet and feeling in his pocket for his keys. "When I see you again, in the course of an hour, I will have your horses ready for you, and you can go and take a ride. It does not take long to get through an interview with Bob," he added, as the door closed behind his client. "That kidnapping is what bothers me, and I am going to speak to old Layton about it. I guess I will take a copy of this will along, so as to be ready to refresh the old scamp's memory."

After a few moments of rapid walking, such as the lawyer indulged in, the ponderous iron gate clanged behind him, and he mounted the

steps and rang the bell. It was answered in due time by Sam, who held the door open and peeped through a crack at the visitor.

"Mr. Layton isn't in, sah," said he.

"How did you know that I wanted to see him?" asked the lawyer.

"'Cause everybody that comes hyar wants to see him, and he's gone away boat-riding," replied Sam.

"Who's boat has he got?"

"Sah? Oh, he's got Mr. Gus's boat, and don't allow to be back before to-morrow morning."

"Well, I guess you had better give him that card and tell him I must see him," said Mr. Gibbons. "I am Bob's attorney, and if I don't see him now I shall see him before a justice's court. Tell him that."

Sam reluctantly took the card and disappeared, and in process of time the lawyer heard Mr. Layton coming along the hall. He did not open the door as Sam had done, but opened it wide and greeted Mr. Gibbons with great warmth.

"I never was more surprised in my life

than I was when Sam told me that he said I was out boat-riding, and that I wouldn't be back until to-morrow morning," said Mr. Layton, extending his hand to Mr. Gibbons, and at the same time ignoring the fact that he had told Sam to deliver that message not five minutes before. "I did intend to go boat-riding, but something happened to prevent. Come in."

The lawyer wanted to smile, but did not. He knew why it was that Mr. Layton came out to see him. The knowledge that he would be summoned before a justice of the peace to answer the questions that were to be propounded to him had quickened his perceptions wonderfully. He followed Mr. Layton along the hall to the library, and the door was closed upon him.

"Sit down," said his host, who seemed to think that by rapid talking he could put off the questions a little longer. "Let me take your hat."

"Thank you. I can put it here on the table just as well," said Mr. Gibbons. "I shall not be able to stop long."

"You see," added Mr. Layton, "Gus has lately come into possession of a new boat, and is anxious to try her. I don't know anything about sailing—"

"The new boat you speak of belongs to Bob," interrupted the lawyer, who knew he was going to listen to a lie. "It is moored back of old Ben Watson's place."

"Why—why, what has he got it there for?" asked Mr. Layton. "The schooner doesn't belong to Bob."

"Yes, I think it does, together with his ponies also. I came up here to speak about them," said Mr. Gibbons, when he noticed Mr. Layton changing color.

"Well, Gus has taken quite a fancy to those ponies, and I think it best to keep them for him," replied Mr. Layton. "Anything else he wants he can take. I don't believe in being hard on the boy, for goodness knows he has enough to contend with. If he is so awfully bent on having those ponies I will purchase them."

"Bob is not bent on having anything but what is his by right," said the lawyer,

drawing a copy of the will from his pocket. "The ponies were the last things his father gave him, and he went off to school and never saw his father afterward. It won't do for you to buy them. Bob wants the ponies, and nothing else."

"Well, of course if you put it that way he'll have to have them," said Mr. Layton, who did not want to hear the codicil read. He touched a little bell that stood on the table and went to the door to meet Sam. "Go to the stable and tell the hostler to hitch up the ponies. Will you have the covered buggy or the dog-cart?" he added, turning to the lawyer.

"I will take them both. Bob wants everything that belongs to him."

Mr. Layton gave the necessary order, and then came back and plumped into his chair. He was trembling, but he was mad, too.

"It seems to me that this is a very queer will," said he. "What did he bequeath all Bob's things to my son for, and then go to work and take them away?"

"I have the authority for doing it right

here," said Mr. Gibbons, tapping the will as he spoke. "Do you want to hear it read?"

"No!" exclaimed Mr. Layton, hotly. "I have heard more about that codicil than it is worth."

"I think myself that you made a slight mistake in drawing it up," said the lawyer; and out of the corner of his eye he watched the effect of his words upon Mr. Layton. "You did not expect that your son was going to take such a fancy to the boat and the ponies, and so you willed them to Bob. Now, I am going to tell you one thing before I leave: You know where that man is."

"What man do you mean?" stammered Mr. Layton.

"Captain Nellis," replied the lawyer.

"Why, do you think that man is alive? He is dead. His boat came in the next morning—"

"You may think so, but I don't," said Mr. Gibbons, who had of late changed his ideas on that subject. "Then think of the two worthless men you brought up to sign that codicil. When Captain Nellis made his will

he got two of the best men in town to witness his signature, and men, too, that you could find every day in the week. Where are those men you got to sign for you?"

"Look here, Mr. Gibbons," began Mr. Layton.

"Just answer my question, please."

"They have gone to sea, I suppose. That's their way of making a living."

"Yes; and I suppose you had some hand in sending them there, too."

"Look here!" said Mr. Layton, arising and placing his hand upon the signal-bell, "I don't propose to be insulted this way any longer!"

"Ring that bell, if you please, and I will summon you where you will answer not only these, but numerous other questions which I shall ask you," said the lawyer, firmly. "I am bound to get at the root of this matter sooner or later. Sit down. Now," he added, as Mr. Layton sank back in his chair, "what is this story I hear about Barlow kidnapping Bob and Watson?"

"Old Watson was fast asleep in the saloon

and dreamed it all," said Mr. Layton, confidently. "There was not a word said about kidnapping him, or Bob either."

"I expected that would be your excuse, but it seems that he got up a lively fight on the strength of it," said the lawyer, putting on his hat. "These questions are mere feelers. I think you will be obliged to answer some others."

"Whenever I am brought before a court and asked questions by somebody who has a right to an answer, I assure you that I shall be on hand," replied Mr. Layton, taking no note of the fact that he had answered every one of Mr. Gibbons's questions without thinking to inquire if *he* had a right to a reply. "I have nothing that I wish to conceal."

"This old villain is certainly responsible for Captain Nellis's disappearance," thought Mr. Gibbons, as he stood at the table pulling on his gloves. "Now, if I could only fasten it upon him!" Then aloud he said: "This Captain Johnson, who took Captain Nellis to sea against his will, had a miscellaneous cargo aboard, and he was to use it in trading among

the savages in the South Sea Islands; consequently Captain Nellis must be there."

"Don't I tell you that he is dead? His boat—"

"I don't care to hear about his boat any more. I was there, and I know all about it. As everybody in town is interested in this matter it will pay to hunt up Captain Nellis. Good-morning!"

"When you get ready to make the move, just call on me. I will pay my share most willingly. Good-morning!"

Mr. Gibbons went out at the door and around the house toward the stables, and Mr. Layton, as soon as he had seen him go, carefully locked the door and flung himself into a chair as if he hadn't a particle of strength left. At the same time a curtain that covered one of the windows was pushed aside, and Gus stepped into the room. He had been engaged in a consultation with his father when the coming of the lawyer was announced, and instead of going up stairs to his room he went into the window, so he could hear what the men had to talk about. Gus was fully as pale as

his father, but he did not tremble so much. He was mad, too—so mad that when he took a chair he caught up a heavy paper-weight and slammed it down on the table.

"Now, father, you have done it!" he exclaimed. "I wondered where that schooner had gone, but the man who had charge of it was so cross and ugly that I didn't care to question him; and now Bob has got it without saying so much as by your leave. And now my horses are gone, too! I don't see what made you let that man insult you. Why didn't you ring the bell and call for Sam to show him the door?"

"Oh, Gus, it is all out on—" He was about to say that it was all out on him, but checked himself in time, and springing to his feet he walked up and down the room, wringing his hands until there didn't seem to be a drop of blood in them. "Gus, I have been bothered so many times since I came into this property that sometimes I feel like giving it all up. I feel as though it wasn't mine."

"Yes; and a pretty sight you would be, giving up all that money just to please a lit-

tle cub who has done nothing but insult and abuse me ever since I have been at school!" said Gus, in a disgusted tone. "But, father, is the will all right?"

"The will is all right. I defy him or any lawyer to find a thing in it that isn't just as it should be."

"Then it is yours, and I don't see why you should give it up. But I am sorry that little cub has got those horses. You will have to buy me another pair."

"I can easily do that, but first I must wait until this will case is settled. I don't know what to do. At times, when I go down town, there isn't a person on the streets who will notice me. You heard what Mr. Gibbons said about everybody being in favor of hunting up Captain Nellis?"

"What do you care for that? All you have to do is to jingle some dollars in your pocket, and think how much better off you are. I bet any of them would gladly change places with you."

"I don't know of anybody who would change places with me," moaned his father.

"He's got a mighty slim chance to work on."

"Who has?"

"That man Gibbons. You heard what he said about arresting Captain Johnson the next time he comes back here, didn't you?"

"Yes; and I reckon he'll have a lively time doing it. He won't be back under two or three years, and I'll watch my chance and send word to him. He shall not come back here if I can help it. There goes Mr. Gibbons now, and he's got the dog-cart behind him," said Gus, throwing as much contempt into his tones as he could. "I wish those ponies would run away with Bob the first time he goes out riding, and spill him out and break his neck!"

"So do I," said Mr. Layton, mentally. "So do I. It would be a heap of bother off my shoulders. The amount of it is, I must do something. I can't stand this way of living any longer."

CHAPTER XIII.

ONE DISPOSED OF.

JOE LUFKIN having eaten his breakfast had started away on one of his useless errands—at least that was what Hank and his mother thought about it; but the truth was he had set out for Middletown, to see how his new scheme would work. He hadn't done much sleeping the night before, for his plan seemed to have banished slumber from his eyes. Of course, he indulged in building some gorgeous air-castles on the strength of it. After he got a little way from home he stopped and took the clipping out of his pocket.

“Like pulling berries off the bushes,” he soliloquized, as he put the clipping back, having finished reading it, and went on with his walk. “That would hit me, I tell you. I wonder what men I can get to help me.”

While Joe was revolving this problem in

his mind he came within sight of Barlow's saloon. There were two men standing there, and they were engaged in earnest conversation. The one was Barlow, and the stranger in the light suit he took to be the captain of the *Smart*. It was hard work to raise a crew at that time of the year, and the captain had come in to see what Barlow could do to assist him. As he approached them he heard the one-legged man say to him :

"Captain, you just go on board your boat and never mind it. I'll have the men there ready for you to-night."

He didn't hesitate to talk this way before Joe Lufkin, for the latter was a man who could be hired to keep his mouth shut. As the captain moved away Barlow turned and gave Joe a sign, who followed him into his saloon and into a little back room, the door of which was closed and bolted.

"Well, Joe, where are you going to-day?" said Barlow, seating himself on the table. "I don't generally see you move so fast."

"Read that," said Lufkin, handing him the article he had cut from the paper the night

before. "It seems to me that if such a thing could be worked at one place it could be at another. Don't it to you?"

Barlow read the clipping and then ejaculated, "By George!" and crossed his uninjured leg over the stump and read it again.

"Where did you get this?" he asked.

"It came around my shoes last night," answered Joe. "Do you think I can get anybody to help me?"

"Why, in course you can't, although such people have no right to have diamonds and rubies. You'll have to get away out of this country, and never come in it again. If such a thing could be thought of, and men got together to help, what's the reason that them fellers up about New York haven't tried it before?"

"We'll go masked," said Joe.

"Whose boat are you going to get?"

"I think Bob Nellis's boat would be about right."

"It will come out on you, as sure as the world. Suppos'n somebody pulls your mask off! Joe, you had better let that thing out."

This decision was a great disappointment to Joe. The very first man he had applied to for assistance had thrown cold water upon it.

"But I have something better for you than that, and you won't have to go away, either," continued Barlow. "You know the Captain of the J. W. Smart is finding it hard work to raise a crew. I've got two men on my mind, and will give you fifty dollars if you will get them for me."

"Fifty dollars is a heap of money, but it ain't a patching to what I could make out of the other thing," said Joe. "Who are the men?"

"They are Bob Nellis and ole Ben Watson," said Barlow in an earnest whisper. "I know you don't like either of them any better than I do."

"That there's a fact, and I am glad that ole Cap'n Nellis is played out. - Why don't you go and get 'em yourself?"

"Well, you see, I have had a fuss here in the house, thanks to that ole Watson, and Mr. Sprague told me that the next row I raised here he would shut me up. Now, I don't want to be shut up. I want to raise a crew

for that vessel, and at the same time I want to be right here in my saloon, so that I can prove it."

"And you want me to do the work for you?"

"In course I do. If you would go up there and get 'em, why I should be just that much ahead."

But it is impossible to get those two men," said Joe, after thinking a moment. "They are there, right together, and how are you going to get them apart?"

"I don't ask you to go up there alone; my barkeeper will go with you, and after he captures Watson you mustn't be surprised if he gives him a lick or two to pay him off for the punching he gave Samson in my saloon yesterday. Samson is awful mad about that."

"I don't care how often he punches him, so long as he lets me alone. But there's one thing that bothers me: Suppos'n Cap'n Nells should come back; wouldn't I get fits to pay me for the part I took in carrying it out? You see, I have got to look out for things."

"You don't suppose, because they took a different ship, that they are going to meet Cap-

tain Nellis, who left this port six months ago!" said Barlow, with a laugh. "Such a thing isn't to be thought of. You see, you don't know how badly the mates will treat them. They are mighty soft and easy around here, but when they get them afloat and draw near to some port at which they can ship cheaper hands, then you want to look out. They'll haze 'em till they are ready to jump overboard. It will be a year or two before they get back, even if they live so long, and by that time you can easily make up some sort of a story to tell them. Fifty dollars is a heap of money for a man like you. You needn't do any work as long as it lasts."

"You are certain you won't tell anybody of it?"

"Good land of Goshen! Ain't I as deep in the mud as you are? You don't imagine that I am going to split on myself? If the folks around here don't find out who shipped 'em till I tell 'em, they'll never find it out."

Joe rested his elbows on his knees and thought about it. Fifty dollars was a heap of money for him to make by one night's

work, and he wished there had not been so much danger in it. Aside from Captain Nellis coming back, he wasn't so certain that he could make a prisoner of old Ben Watson. He was afraid that Ben might see through the plot and go to work and whip him and Samson both; then there would be the very mischief to pay. But fifty dollars! That was worth trying for.

"You see, I am down on everyone who bears that name," said Barlow, hitting the table a sounding whack with his fist. "His ole pap laid me up in ordinary when I might to-day have been the master of as fine a ship as ever sailed, and I have been waiting for an opportunity to get even with him; but he has gone off to sea, although I had no hand in sending him there—more's the pity—and so I must take revenge on somebody else."

"That Bob of his always was stuck up," said Joe.

"Did you ever see the like? I never did. He won't come near my house, although he knows that I used to be one of his father's best hands. And yet the ole feller had to go

and pop me over when there wasn't no need of it."

"Well, let me out, and I'll go somewhere and think it over," said Joe. "There's most too much risk in it."

"Well, be in a hurry," said Barlow, "for you have got till dark to make up your mind. I wish I had two good legs, and I wouldn't ask anybody to go for me. I'd go myself, and be glad of the chance."

Barlow did not unlock the entrance which gave admission into the saloon, for he heard voices in there, but a side door, which opened into an alley; and Joe Lufkin, after sticking his head out and making sure that there was no one in sight, slipped out and took his way down the street.

"And so Barlow thinks I had better let that job out," said he, pulling off his hat and digging his fingers into his hair to stir up his ideas. "I just won't do it. Fifty dollars ain't a patching to what I could make if I could only get somebody to help me. And suppos'n I did have to go away—I guess I'd have money enough to last me all my lifetime.

I'll just think about it. And now, what am I to do in regard to those two men? I tell you, there's a heap of risk in it; but fifty dollars! That's a power of money."

Almost unconsciously Joe Lufkin turned his steps toward Ben Watson's house, and by the time he got through thinking about it he found himself in front of the gate. He thought he would go in and see how matters lay, and perhaps when the time for action arrived something would suggest itself to him; so he unlatched the gate and went up the gravelled walk that led to Watson's domicile. Old Ben did not happen to be in the house. He had been neglecting his garden of late, and was now busy with the weeds that choked his tomato-plants. He heard Joe coming, and stopped and leaned upon his hoe.

"Howdy," said Joe.

Ben did not answer. He simply nodded his head; and as he stood there, with his sleeves rolled up and showing all the muscles on his arms, which looked as solid as iron, Joe came to the conclusion that he would need somebody stronger than Samson to help secure him.

"I just thought I would come in here to see how you are getting on," said Joe, who thought he ought to make some apology for his appearance. "Where's Bob, this fine morning?"

"He's just gone down to a lawyer's," said Ben. "I tell you, he ain't a-going to let this thing rest till he gets his money."

The sailor went on with his hoeing, and Joe strolled up until he came quite close to him. How big and strong he looked, as Joe thought of knocking him down! Once down, with his hands bound and a gag thrust into his mouth, he would be all right. There was Ben's boat, with a tarpaulin buttoned over it to keep the waves out; and if Ben were laid away in that boat, with the tarpaulin thrown over him, Joe could easily row him down to the city. Something prompted him to make the attempt. There was nobody in sight. With all the strength he had he drew his right arm back, and with the speed of a thunderbolt shot it straight out from the shoulder. It was a deadly blow, and Ben dropped on the instant.

“There!” said Joe, trembling all over with excitement, “I reckon you will lay there until I can get some ropes to tie you with. I’ve hit enough of them blows during my experience in the army to know that you won’t get over it for ten or fifteen minutes.”

Joe gathered his victim up and made all haste to carry him into the bushes, out of sight, and there he laid him down while he went back toward the house to place things to rights. He first picked up the hoe, and with it destroyed all the footprints that he had made in the garden; and after that he put the hoe up against the side of the house, as Ben might have done when he got through using it. Then he went into the wood-shed to find a piece of cloth for a gag, and some pieces of rope with which to confine Ben when he came to himself. The rope and the gag were quickly made use of, and even Ben, strong as he was, would have found himself powerless.

The next thing was the boat. There was still no one in sight, and Joe walked out on the wharf as though he had a right there.

He unbuttoned the tarpaulin, got in and got out the oars and pulled up a little way, where he knew there was no prospect of anyone seeing him. It was but the work of a few minutes to carry Ben down to the boat, put him in, and draw the tarpaulin over him, and then Joe began his ride to the village. All this while he was uneasy, for he feared that Bob might return; but he succeeded in reaching the upper wharf and pulling under it without attracting anybody's attention. If anyone saw him rowing in the boat, they probably thought he had a load of fish. Ben lay perfectly still; and, after examining his bonds to make sure that he could not get away, Joe fastened the boat, got out, and bent his steps toward Barlow's saloon. There was no one in except the proprietor, and Joe leaned over the counter and whispered to him.

"I've got one," said he.

"What?" exclaimed Barlow.

"I say I've got one, and he is now bound and gagged in a boat under a wharf a little ways from here," repeated Joe. "It's Watson; and

I tell you I wouldn't make a prisoner of him again for four times fifty dollars. I hit him a blow right behind the ear, and he fell as if he had been shot."

"And in broad daylight, too?" said Barlow, who was utterly confounded. "Are you sure no one saw you?"

"As sartin as I can be. I kept a watch out for Bob, for fear that he would come back, but he never came. Now, you want to go down there and be ready to take him off to the vessel."

Joe went one way and Barlow the other—Joe to walk around and get over some of his excitement, and Barlow to hunt up his bar-keeper and get him to attend to the saloon during his absence, and in a few minutes he was making good time toward the wharf. Samson was mad about it. He fully expected to give the unconscious Watson "a whack or two" in payment for the drubbing he had administered a day before, and he didn't like the idea of having him captured by anybody else. He came into the saloon and looked all around for Joe, but he had gone.

Barlow went under the wharf, and there he found the boat with a tarpaulin spread out in the bow. He lifted it, and underneath lay Ben, so white and still that Barlow began to think he was dead.

“You know too much for me,” said he, grimly. “I guess if you are out of the way for a year or two I will stand a chance of making some money. I’ll teach you to punch my barkeeper up, as you did yesterday.”

Everything depended on getting Ben aboard the vessel before he came to, and Barlow lost no time in going about it. He replaced the tarpaulin again, backed the boat out from under the wharf, and pulled down the middle of the harbor to reach the ship, which was anchored a short distance from shore, waiting for the tide to turn. But Barlow knew that the tide had little to do with the ship’s movements. She had a crew, ready to sail, with the exception of two men, and the captain, being anxious to keep them, resolved to put a little clear water between him and the shore. They couldn’t desert without being seen by somebody.

Barlow put out all his strength on the oars, and at the end of half an hour ran his boat under the vessel's bow, where he laid hold of a bobstay and waited for some one to hail him. He was not obliged to wait long, for in a few minutes the first mate stuck his head over the rail.

"Halloo, Barlow! What have you got there?" he asked.

The man laid hold of the tarpaulin and threw it aside, so that the mate could see the form of Ben Watson.

"That's one I have brought for you," said he. "He's a sailor-man, too. I'll have the other ready for you to-night."

"Are you certain that no one saw you?" asked the mate, who was profoundly astonished. He saw that Ben Watson had been overpowered, but that made no difference to him. During the years he had followed the water he had seen many a man brought aboard the ship dead drunk, and if he were questioned in regard to Ben he could easily say that he had come aboard in the same way.

"There was nobody hailed me, and no one came near me while I was coming up here," said Barlow. "I guess he is all right. Now, you want a whip to get him up there."

"He isn't dead, is he?"

"Dead! No. Throw two or three buckets of water over him and he will come around—though, to my mind, he'll have a headache. You had better let him sleep it off."

"Lay for'ard, a couple of you fellers, with a rope!" shouted the mate. "Bring a long one, mind."

In a few minutes a couple of sailors appeared beside the mate, and two ends of a rope were passed down to Barlow. One end he made fast under Ben's arms, the other was tied around his knees, and presently the unconscious sailor was hoisted to the vessel's deck and laid down with as much ceremony as if he had been a log of wood. Then Barlow breathed easier. Ben was disposed of for a year at least, and by the time he got back he hoped to be doing business somewhere else.

"Is the captain aboard?" asked Barlow.

“No, he’s ashore. You’ll get your advance when you bring off the other one.”

Barlow lost no time in shoving off and pulling back to the wharf where he had found the boat. The only person he saw was Joe Lufkin, who was loafing about in the rear of his saloon. No doubt he would have given the world, had he possessed it, to be able to undo the work of the last hour; but he had gone too far to back out.

“It’s all right,” said Barlow. “I wasn’t hailed at all. You are sure you can get the other one?”

Joe said he was certain of it. He had already accomplished the hardest part of the work in securing Ben Watson.

“Because, if you don’t, I can’t pay you the money I promised you,” said Barlow. “The captain’s ashore, and I can’t get any advance until I take the other one up there.”

Joe’s countenance fell on hearing this. He supposed he was going to have twenty-five dollars to jingle around in his pockets.

“Now, you take the boat and place it where it was before,” continued Barlow. “I

haven't been gone more'n an hour, have I? Then you can easily get it back before Bob comes. Good luck to you. But remember this, Joe: don't capture him in broad daylight; there's too much risk in it."

"Look here," said Joe, when Barlow was about to move away; "I want half that money you promised me. I have done half the work, and the man you all feared is now aboard the vessel. I've got some things to get before I go home."

"But I can't pay you," said Barlow. "If I find the captain ashore I can get it."

"Well, you have some of your own money that you can pay me with, haven't you?"

Barlow looked at Joe as if he was more than half-inclined to get angry, but he thought better of it. There was a sullen look in Joe's eyes which he did not like to see. It would be very easy for him to knock the whole thing in the head.

"Oh, well, if you put it that way, of course I have money that I can pay you. You stay here a minute and I will go in and get it. You mean to have every cent that is due you—

don't you?" muttered Barlow, as he opened the side door and disappeared in the saloon. "You want to watch out, or some day I will ship *you* off to sea."

Barlow was gone not more than five minutes, and when he returned he held a package of bills in his hand, which he gave to Joe. Joe ran his eyes over them to make sure that they were all right, and when he straightened up and put them into his pocket he felt he was almost, if not quite, a millionaire. It was a long time since he had so large a sum of money before. Did he want to buy anything for the house? He wanted them in his pocket, so that he could feel them and congratulate himself on his success, for it was a long time since anybody had got away with old Ben single-handed; and, since Barlow would not praise him for it, he felt more like applauding himself.

"I know that they all feared that man, and here I went and captured him alone," said Joe, as he retraced his steps to the boat. "So he punched Samson, yesterday! Well, he didn't punch me!"

As Joe drew near the wharf to which the boat belonged he became uneasy again for fear that Bob had already come back from the lawyer's; but Bob was waiting on the street for his ponies, intending to take a ride, if Mr. Gibbons succeeded in his object. He reached the staple to which the boat was confined, fastened it just as it was before, placed the oars where they belonged, and buttoned down the tarpaulin just as Ben had left it. Then he walked along the wooden pier until he came to the bushes, into which he plunged, and never came out until he was opposite his own house.

CHAPTER XIV.

JOE SUCCESSFUL AGAIN.

“WELL, Hank, I made it. I am to have my ponies and boat, and Uncle Layton can't take them away from me, no matter how much he dislikes to see me have them.”

It was Bob Nellis who spoke. He had come down the stairs and looked all around for Hank, and finally found him standing in front of a store, waiting for him.

“There he goes now,” continued Bob, gazing toward the opposite side of the street, where Mr. Gibbons was moving along with his swinging stride. “In a few minutes he will be coming back this way with the ponies. Now, I will go up to Jones's livery-stable and see what they are going to charge me a week for keeping the two horses. Of course Watson will have to fix a place for the barn before we can build it. The schooner is mine, too.”

Hank was highly delighted to know that his friend had got all he asked for, and told himself that he wished he was as well off in the world. With a span of ponies and a fine sailing boat and a hundred dollars a month he was certain that he would be pretty well contented. He walked with Bob until they reached the livery-stable, and there they found the proprietor, who smiled all over when he saw Bob.

“Want a horse?” said he, shaking hands with Bob. “I have just the nicest little—”

“No, sir, I don’t want a horse, but I have come to ask you what you will take to board a couple for me—my ponies, you know,” said Bob. “It will be some time before Ben can build a barn to keep them in, and I want to know how much you will charge me, say by the month.”

“Why, those ponies are not yours!” said the liveryman. “They belong to Gus Layton.”

“The codicil says they are mine,” said Bob. “Anyway, I shall bring them around here for you to keep.”

“Bob,” said Mr. Jones, extending his hand

again, "I am glad you have got your horses. I saw Gus Layton driving them around, and he didn't look to me like the right fellow behind them. Well, I have always got fifteen dollars a month for boarding horses, but as yours are so much smaller it won't take much to feed them and clean them, and so I will keep them for thirteen dollars; and that includes everything except shoeing."

A bargain was soon struck, and Bob pulled out his hundred dollars and paid the livery-stable keeper twenty-six of them, for which he was promptly given a receipt. After that the boys turned and left the stable. They wanted to get as far toward Uncle Layton's as they could, to meet Mr. Gibbons when coming back with the ponies.

"I don't doubt that Bob's ponies will make just as much trouble as big horses, but somehow I couldn't find it in my heart to charge him full price," said Mr. Jones to one of his men. "I've seen the time when I would charge him fifteen dollars a month and think nothing of it; but now he is short of money. I guess I treated him all right."

In a few minutes Bob and Hank reached the street on which was located the house that Uncle Layton called his own, and just as they arrived within sight of the gate it swung open, and Mr. Gibbons and the ponies came out. He had got everything that belonged to Bob, the dog-cart as well as the top buggy.

"I tell you, Mr. Gibbons is the man to do things!" said Hank. "If he was in your place he would have that money back."

"I don't care about the money," said Bob. "I wish he would bring my father back. I wouldn't ask anything else. But that is something he can't do, although I really think that Mr. Gibbons believes he is alive."

"Halloo! there. You see I've got your ponies for you," exclaimed the lawyer, at the same time wrapping the reins around the whip and getting out of the buggy. "Now you take charge of them."

"Mr. Gibbons, you don't know how grateful I am to you," said Bob.

"That's all right," said the lawyer. "I just told him that the ponies were willed to you, and that settled it. He said that Gus

had taken a powerful shine to the horses, and he thought he would buy them."

He didn't make any remark about the other things on which Mr. Layton had committed himself, for he wanted time to work them up. He had just as good as told him that he knew where the other man—that is, Captain Nellis—was, and he wanted to be sure of it before he went any further.

The boys got into the buggy, Hank took the thills of the dog-cart under his arm, and the two set off for the livery-stable, and after that they started out for a drive. What was it that impelled Bob to turn away from his home instead of going to it as fast as he could? He would have arrived there in time to catch Joe Lufkin in the act of pulling out of the bay with Ben Watson stowed away under the tarpaulin, and that would have saved him an immense amount of trouble. He turned away and went out into the country, and no boy ever enjoyed himself as Bob did during that ride.

"Uncle Layton said that Gus had taken a powerful shine to the ponies, and that he would

have to buy them," said Bob. "He hasn't got money enough to buy them. They are mine, and nobody but myself or a friend shall ever hold a line over them again."

The boys were gone almost all day, until they and the ponies began to get tired of their ride, and then turned toward the livery-stable. The ponies were turned over to those who had a right to care for them, and then they went to the post-office, and continued on their way home. Bob had made it up with Hank that he was to go fishing with him in the morning, and the next day they were to pay a visit to the place where Hank had found the pearls.

"I expect we'll get rich when we go up there," said Bob. "We'll find the pearls so thick that we won't know which one to take first."

"I don't know that I can find any of them," said Hank. "All I know is that I have seen an abundance of them there. And suppose we do find a pocketful of them, there isn't one chance in ten that we shall find another one worth two hundred dollars."

"Well, come over early to-morrow morn-

ing, and we'll go fishing. We certainly will not get rich at that. Good-bye."

Bob kept on to the house, which he found with the doors and windows wide open, but could discover no signs of Ben. He went from room to room, calling out Ben's name, but no answer was returned. He found the hoe beside the wood-shed, showing that Ben had been at work in the garden, and even went down the path that led to the beach. There was Ben's boat tied to its staple, and his schooner riding at anchor just as he had left it; so Ben could not have gone to town.

"Well, I don't see what has become of the old fellow," said Bob. He was not at all alarmed, for Ben was big enough to take care of himself, but he was provoked at being treated that way. "I'll bet I'll give him a piece of my mind when he comes back. And now I'll go and get supper for him. There's no fire in the stove, and he must have gone without his dinner."

To build the fire and put the tea-kettle on was but the work of a few minutes, and to search the cupboard to find the remnants of

the food that had been put away from their breakfast was easily done, for Ben had been on board a man-of-war before he began sailing with Captain Nellis, and had learned to do everything up in ship-shape. All the while he listened for the return of Ben Watson, but he listened in vain. Finally, when six o'clock came, his supper was ready, and Bob sat down to it feeling a little uneasy.

"I declare it beats the world where Ben has gone to," said he. "I never knew him to wander off like this, and I'll just put the toast and tea over to keep them warm for him, and then I'll wash up the things that are left. Perhaps by that time he will be here."

In process of time this work was completed, the food on the table covered and the lamps lighted, and then Bob strolled out to the gate to see if he could see any signs of the missing one. The only man he saw was Joe Lufkin, who walked leisurely along, as if he was not going anywhere in particular. It wasn't at all likely that he had met Ben, seeing that he had just come from home, but Bob was

anxious to tell somebody, and so he appealed to Joe.

"Good evening, Mr. Lufkin," said he. "Have you met Ben Watson, lately?"

"Howdy! Ben Watson? No, I haven't seen him since twelve o'clock this morning. He was down at the dock then. Has he gone back on you?"

"No, he hasn't gone back on me, but he's gone, and I don't know where to look for him," said Bob. "He has gone afoot, too, for the schooner and the skiff are in their places. I wish, if you meet him down town, you would tell him to hurry up. I am getting tired of waiting for him."

"Well, I will," said Joe. "But there is one thing I would like to speak to you about," said the man, gazing up and down the street to make sure that there was no one within sight. "Let's go back to the house. It is something I don't like to speak to you about, but I have got it to do," he added, unlatching the gate and walking in.

"Something you don't like to speak about?" repeated Bob. "By George! I wonder if he

could have found out about that pearl?" he added, mentally. "He won't get any money out of me on the strength of it."

Wondering what excuse he could make to Joe for having Hank's money deposited in his name, Bob turned and walked toward the house, never suspecting treachery from the man who had known him since he was born. He noticed that Joe kept a little way behind him, instead of walking up beside him, but he paid no attention to that, although he often afterward thought of it. Arriving at a place where the path turned and the bushes effectually concealed him from the gate, Joe was all ready for him. His sinewy right arm was drawn back, and Bob sank down beneath a blow as strong as that which felled Ben Watson a few hours before. He had just time to gasp "Joe Lufkin!" and then all was blank to him.

"Yes, sir; it's Joe Lufkin that wants you," said the man, picking up Bob's inanimate form and carrying him with all speed toward the house. "I've got fifty dollars, and that's a heap more money than I have had since

General Lee's paymaster paid me a whole pocketful of worthless paper for my share in the service. It's good money, too."

Joe conveyed his prisoner to the open door of the wood-shed and laid him down until he could get some cloth and ropes with which to confine him. He had kept his eyes open when he was there before, and knew right where the articles lay. He secured them without any trouble at all, and in a few seconds Bob was helpless. As there was no danger that any one would discover him—it was now pitch-dark—Joe worked with more confidence than he did a while before, and in less than half an hour Bob was lying insensible in the boat under the wharf, and Joe was making good time toward Barlow's saloon. He found the man in front of his house, where he had kept himself ever since Joe began his work, and a very slight sign made him lead the way to his back room. When he had closed and locked the door Joe said:

"I've got the other one."

"Bully for you!" exclaimed Barlow.
"Where is he?"

“He’s under Scotter’s wharf, where I left Ben. You want to be quick in getting him aboard the vessel. He may come to, you know.”

“All right. I’ll have him there in a jiffy. Now, you stay around here and I’ll have that other twenty-five dollars to hand you. You have made a pretty good haul. Fifty dollars for one afternoon’s work is more than you can make very day.”

Barlow went after his hat, and Joe went out of the side door to the front of the saloon, where he met Samson, the barkeeper. He ought to have been warned by the evil look in that man’s eye; but Joe was thinking only of the money that was to come to him and how much pleasure he would take in it, and to know that he had earned it all.

“You area pretty fellow, I must say,” said Samson, in a low tone.

“Why, I didn’t do any more than you would have done,” said Joe.

“To go around and take twenty-five dollars out of my pocket!” continued Samson. “I was to get something for helping you. Never mind—I will be even with you yet.”

“What are you going to do?” asked Joe. He thought of the two blows he had struck Ben Watson and Bob Nellis, and made up his mind that if Samson got one of them, he would be a long time in getting even with him.

“I’ll ship you off to sea—that’s what I’ll do,” said Samson, in savage tones; “and I’ll get twenty-five dollars for that. So be careful what you do.”

Joe was thunderstruck. He looked at Samson in a frightened sort of way and then continued on his walk up the street.

“I never thought of that!” said he, with a dazed look on his face. “The only thing I can do now is to get my money and steer clear of Barlow in the future, for he could ship me off to sea as well as not.”

Joe was uneasy after that; and to show that he was terribly frightened he kept in the light of the stores as much as possible. At the end of an hour, when he thought Barlow had been allowed time to go to the vessel and return, he started toward Scotter’s wharf; but he did not walk along as a man would who

had great confidence in himself. Every two or three steps he would turn and look behind him, as if he was afraid that somebody would slip up and give him one of those deadly blows.

"I'll tell you what's a fact: I've gone and put my foot in it," soliloquized Joe, turning once more to make sure that there was no one dogging his footsteps. "I've got to keep in my house after nightfall as sure as the world. Ah! there you are. Did you make it?"

"I did," replied Barlow, "and here's your boat ready for you to take back. Here's your money."

He had reached the dock just in time to catch Barlow on his return. He handed him the painter with one hand and with the other produced a roll of bills.

"You are all right for one year at least," said he. "They won't be back before that time, and when they come you will have to make up some story to tell them."

"Well, say, Barlow, Samson is awful mad."

"Well, he was going to get a little something for helping you capture them men," replied Barlow, indifferently. "Wouldn't you

be mad, too, if somebody had taken twenty-five dollars out of your pocket?"

"But he says he is going to get even with me. He is going to ship me off to sea."

"Aw! don't you let that bother you. He told you that just to frighten you."

"But you won't stand by and see him do that?"

"In course I won't. I may want you to help me again."

"'Cause, Barlow, I don't know anything about a vessel," said Joe, earnestly. "I am too old to learn."

"Course you are. A man has to learn that business when he is young. Now you go home with the boat—be sure and leave everything there just as it was—and if anybody says anything to you about this night's work, you may bet that I didn't tell 'em."

"No doubt you will want me to help you again," soliloquized Joe, as he climbed down into the boat with the painter in his hand, "but it's a long time before you'll get Joe Lufkin. I tell you I am well out of this scrape now, and if I ever get into it again

you can shoot me! Let somebody else try their hand, and see how they will come out."

Somehow Joe Lufkin experienced a desire he had never known before, and that was to be safe at home. He always felt safer when at his wife's side than he did when alone. He pulled with all his might, and in due time arrived at the wooden wharf and made the boat fast where she belonged. Everything was placed just as it was before, and then he walked rapidly toward the path which ran by the house. The doors and windows stood invitingly open, but Joe did not want to go in there. Everything seemed to tell him of the inmates he had torn from their home, and whether or not they would ever come back again was a mystery. When he reached the gate he looked up and down the road, and seeing no one in sight, he went out and closed it behind him.

"Whether they ever come back again or not, I've got fifty dollars," said he, with a chuckle, taking the two rolls of bills from his pocket and folding them into one. "Now

when I get time I am a-going to think up some story to tell them, as Barlow suggested. But Samson's shipping *me* off to sea—that's what bangs me! Howsomever, I am safe from him so long as I stay here at my house."

Joe's first thought was to get a candle and go over the bills one by one, and see if Barlow had cheated him; but he soon came to the conclusion that it would be safer to do that when his wife and son were in bed. He entered the door without saying anything to anybody, threw off his hat and coat, filled his pipe, and sat in his usual place in the doorway and smoked and meditated. All of a sudden he thought of something.

"Say, Hank, you ain't got nothing to do, and I propose that you stay around and watch me," said he.

"Stay around and watch you do nothing?" exclaimed Hank. He had been engaged in an earnest conversation with his mother, but it was cut short when his father unlatched the gate. He was now looking up a book, to put in the hours until bedtime arrived. "Father, I can't do it. I am engaged to go

fishing with Bob Nellis to-morrow, and the next day I am going hunting with him."

He didn't say anything about the pearls he expected to find. He was well enough acquainted with his father to know that he would haunt that stream night and day as long as a single pearl remained.

"Bob Nellis!" said Joe, in disgust.

It was right on the point of his tongue to tell Hank that by the time he got ready to go fishing with him Bob would be a long ways from there; but he didn't say it. He must keep that with the utmost secrecy. His family did not know that he had anything to do with Barlow, and the longer they could remain in ignorance of it the better it would be for him.

"Yes, Bob Nellis," said Hank. "I don't see what you have against that fellow since he has lost his money."

"I hain't got anything against him," said Joe, as if he were profoundly surprised. "I never said a word against him."

"I know you haven't, but you always sneer whenever his name is mentioned. What do you want me to keep watch of you for?"

"To see that Barlow's barkeeper doesn't ship me off to sea," said Joe, impressively.

"When did he say that?" asked Hank, who did not know whether to believe it or not.

"A little while ago. I was coming by his saloon, and Barlow and his barkeeper were sitting out in front, just getting ready to go to bed, I believe, and Samson said it would be a nice thing to ship me off on board a vessel. I tell you, the way he spoke it made me afraid of him."

"I tell you, I guess he has got enough of sending men to sea," said Hank. "He tried his best to capture Ben Watson, but Ben whipped them all."

"Well, I'll bet he didn't lick—"

Joe was about to let the cat out of the bag, but caught his breath just in time. He hid his confusion under a paroxysm of coughing.

"You will bet he didn't lick whom?" asked Hank, with no suspicion of the truth.

"I'll bet he wouldn't have licked me if I had been there," said Joe. "I am down on all such worthless fellers as Samson is."

"So is every white man. Did he say he had got his plans already laid to send you to sea?"

"No, he didn't say that, but he said it would be nice if he could do it. But I suppose you would rather go a-fishing with Bob Nellis than to watch me and see that I ain't carried off?"

"I tell you, father, I can't do it. I want to make some money, don't I? I make all there is that is coming into the house."

"Mighty clear of you're making all the money that comes into the house," said Joe Lufkin to himself as he thrust his hand into his pocket and grasped the roll of bills he had made that day. "I've got fifty dollars that you don't know anything about."

"Bob gives me something every time I go fishing with him, and I tell you, a little comes handy sometimes," continued Hank. "You can look out for yourself. I have got other fish to fry."

"Well, then, go and fry them. I guess by the time you see your paw sent off to sea you'll

wish you had paid more attention to him and less to that Bob Nellis."

Mrs. Lufkin took no part in this conversation because she saw that Hank was able to defend himself. After that there was silence in the house. Mrs. Lufkin went on with her sewing, Hank pored over his book, and Joe sat in his place and smoked and meditated. Finally the clock struck nine, and as Hank had an early start to make he bade his father and mother good-night and went to his room. Mrs. Lufkin sewed a little while longer, and then she, too, retired, and then Joe got up and began to bestir himself. He took a seat by the lamp, pulled his roll of bills from his pocket, and went over them one by one, to see that Barlow had not cheated him. They were all there.

"It's good money, too," said Joe, holding them in one hand and slapping the other over them. "Fifty dollars is a heap of money for me, now I tell you. I wonder where Bob and Ben are by this time? They're out on the ocean, and I am free from them for at least a year. Now, I guess I will go to sleep."

Without removing his clothes, Joe lay down on the lounge in the sitting-room ; but slumber was quite out of the question. The immense amount of money he had in his pocket prevented that.

CHAPTER XV.

GUS HEARS THE NEWS.

FOR long hours Joe Lufkin lay there upon the lounge, with his left hand thrust deep into his pocket, so that he could feel the bills, and all the while he was wondering how he was going to spend his money. He wanted a boat more than anything else, and he wished more than once that he had stuck out for a hundred dollars. Nobody could buy a boat worth anything for fifty dollars; and suppose he paid the cash for it, the inquiry would naturally rise, where did he get so much money?

“I declare it seems as though I have got to keep my money, now that I have got it,” said Joe, getting so nervous that he could scarcely lie still. “I never thought of the way I was going to spend it, and here I am no better off

than I was before. But I've got fifty dollars, and that's more than every man can say."

Finally the cat-birds and the robins began to sing, and that admonished him that morning was coming; and in a few minutes more Hank's door opened and the boy came out. He was surprised to find his father lying there on the lounge with his clothes on, as if he hadn't been to bed at all.

"Why, father, when did you get up?" he asked.

"I've been this way all night," said Joe. "I didn't shut my eyes in sleep last night."

"Were you sick?"

"No; I have been worrying about myself. Here you are making all the money that comes into the house and I ain't making a thing. I get that way sometimes," said Joe, drawing on his imagination, "and I don't sleep for three or four nights."

"But, father, if you would only try to get work we could get along a great deal better," said Hank.

"I can't find any work to suit me. This wound in my side bothers me awful."

Hank didn't say any more. When he got to talking about the wound in his side, which he wouldn't have known he had there if he did not look at the scar now and then, it shut off all argument. He went into the kitchen and started the fire, after which he came out with his hat on.

"I guess I'll go now," said he. "Bob always has a cup of coffee waiting for me. Good-bye."

"I reckon all the fishing you do with Bob Nellis to-day won't hurt you much," said Jo, with a chuckle. "If the J. W. Smart is as swift as they say she is, she's a hundred miles at sea. I will go and hide this money while I am about it, for if anything should get out on me I'd be in a fix."

He sat up on the lounge, yawned and stretched himself, and went out behind the house. He found a hoe there, where it had remained in all sorts of weather—ever since, in fact, he had got through hoeing a half-row of peas—and with it in his hand he vanished behind some currant-bushes. Joe was a worker if he set about it, and in five min-

utes he had a hole dug and his roll of bills covered up. When his wife called him to breakfast he was busy in pulling the weeds from some string-beans.

"I have been working at that just to see if I could stand it in the hay-field," said Joe, placing his hand on his side and sinking down on the lounge, "but I find that I can't. Halloo, Hank! What brought you back to the house all on a sudden? Your face is pale, too."

"Father," said Hank, in a trembling voice, "where did you say you saw Samson last night?"

"Out in front of his saloon," replied Joe. "He and Barlow were out there the whole evening. Why do you ask that question?"

"They have been up to something, and I wish I could prove it on them," said Hank, seating himself in the nearest chair and resting his elbows on his knees. "Bob and Ben Watson have not been home since last night."

"Well, what of that? They have gone off a-fishing, likely."

"But their beds haven't been slept in. The

doors of the house are all open and the lamp burning, just as it was when Bob left there."

"Why, what do you think has become of them?" asked Mrs. Lufkin, who stood by holding a dish of fried potatoes in her hand.

"They have been shipped off to sea; that's what's the matter with them. The J. W. Smart isn't in her berth, either. She's gone."

Mrs. Lufkin was overcome with astonishment, while Joe drew his chair up to the table and sat down to his breakfast as if nothing had happened.

"You mark my words: They have gone off somewhere, and of course there wasn't anybody to leave word with where they had gone. They'll be around all right in the course of the day."

"Where are you going?" asked Mrs. Lufkin, as Hank arose to his feet.

"I am going down to see Mr. Gibbons about it," said Hank.

"Better sit up and have some breakfast first," said his father.

"No, sir. It is too serious a matter to

waste time eating breakfast. If Mr. Gibbons thinks they have gone, all right. I am going to see him the first thing I do."

"Why, Gibbons don't know any more about it than you," said his father. "They went off—"

But Hank was already on his way toward the gate. Having made up his mind that the lawyer was the one to see, he lost no time in getting there; but when, after half an hour's rapid running, he rang the bell and Mr. Gibbons came to the door, he saw by the blank look on the gentleman's face that he did not comprehend the matter any better than he did.

"Why, I can't imagine what sent them away," said Mr. Gibbons. "I did not know that they intended to go anywhere."

"But, Mr. Gibbons, they have been shipped on board some vessel that they never signed articles for," said Hank, earnestly. "They would never go off in this way without letting me know it, for I agreed to go fishing with Bob to-day."

Mr. Gibbons started as if he had been shot.

He got his hat and started toward Ben Watson's house (all the while he moved so fast that Hank had to trot to keep pace with him), and during the walk he inquired closely in regard to what Barlow and Samson had been doing the night before.

"They did not have any hand in doing it, Mr. Gibbons," said Hank. "Father saw them when he came by the saloon about ten o'clock, and Samson said how nice it would be if he could capture *him* and send him off to sea. Barlow and Samson were around their saloon all the evening."

Being thus baffled at the very outset, Mr. Gibbons did not come to any conclusion regarding the mysterious disappearance of his two friends. When he reached the house with Hank he went all over it, but not the smallest thing did he find in the shape of a clue. Remember, the two men had been captured out of doors, and consequently there was not the first thing in the house disturbed. He put out the lamp and went down to the beach, to where the boats lay. Not a thing had been disturbed there, either; but, looking in the

direction that Hank pointed, he saw that the J. W. Smart had left her moorings. There was one thing about it, he told himself: Ben and Bob were aboard that vessel; but who was to blame for putting them there?"

"This beats me!" said he, in an undertone. "I wish I knew who is at fault in this."

"So do I," said Hank, his eyes filling with tears. "Bob wanted to let every fellow alone, and they wouldn't let him. They had to interfere with him and send him off to sea. There's no knowing whether he will come back or not."

"Let us hope that he will," said the lawyer, fervently. "Now, the next thing is something else."

"What are you going to do?"

"I am going to lock the house up and take the key with me," said Mr. Gibbons, "and then I am going around to the livery-stable to inquire if he has been there. If his horses are still in the stable, I shall get out a warrant for Barlow's and Samson's arrest. I am going to make them tell, under oath, where they were last night."

Hank did not say a word to Mr. Gibbons about it, but he determined to keep near him until he found out what had become of Bob Nellis. He accompanied him toward the livery-stable, and was not much surprised to hear the proprietor say that he hadn't seen Bob since he brought his ponies there to be taken care of. There was something on Hank's face that made the livery-stable keeper inquire:

"What's wrong about Bob? Has he gone off?"

"I should say he has," replied Mr. Gibbons. "He has gone off, and nobody seems to know where he is. His house was open and the lamp was lighted, just as it would be if Bob was going to come back to it in the dark."

"He's aboard the Smart; that's where he is," said Hank. "And he did not sign articles, neither."

"The Smart?" echoed the proprietor. "I'll bet there's just where he is, for yesterday the captain came to me and asked me, in a joking sort of way, if I could find a man to help

him out. He had a man or two less than he wanted, and he would be short-handed even then."

"I guess Barlow and Samson can tell all about it," said the lawyer. "At any rate, I am going to try them."

"Are you going to arrest them? I think that will be a good plan. I will go with you. Those pestiferous men have been a heap of mischief in this town, and I should be glad to see them swept out of it."

The three left the livery-stable, and in due course reached 'Squire Sprague's office. There were half a dozen persons in the room, one of whom was a constable. Mr. Gibbons stated his grievance, to which all present listened with interest, and finally asked for a warrant for Barlow and Samson.

"I reckon you've got them this time," said 'Squire Sprague, during which he drew a sheet of paper toward him. "I ought to have arrested them when I went in to stop a fight, but my boy thought that a lawyer had better be consulted first. We will have them up here in short order."

The warrant was speedily made out, and the constable took it and disappeared down the stairs. While he was gone, Mr. Gibbons explained that he was arresting them merely on supposition; that Bob and Ben Watson were gone, and that Barlow's conduct was such that they naturally connected him with it. He wanted him to state positively where he had been the night before. While he was talking about it the constable and his prisoners came up; and this was not all of them, either. All the hangers-on about his saloon accompanied them—some as witnesses, and some merely to look on. Barlow was mad, there was no two ways about that, while his barkeeper was as indifferent as you please.

“Look a-here, 'squire,” said Barlow, in a gruff voice, “I'd like to know what I have been arrested for now.”

“Take off your hat and sit down, and in a few minutes you will find out,” said the 'squire. “Do you want a lawyer?”

“No, I don't. I am innocent of any wrong, and I am able to defend myself. I ain't had a fuss in my house since you was there.”

After a few preliminaries had been gone through Mr. Gibbons took up the questioning, and informed him that Bob and Ben Watson had been missing ever since the night before, and Barlow was supposed to know where they were. He had threatened to kidnap Ben Watson and send him aboard ship—

“I didn’t, neither,” interrupted Barlow. “Ben was asleep and dreamed it all.”

—“Send him aboard a ship,” continued the lawyer, paying no heed to the breaking of his speech; and they wanted to know right where he had kept himself when Bob and Watson were captured. Where was he the night before? Barlow listened attentively to all the lawyer had to say, as if the news was quite new to him, and more than one in the courtroom believed that he had heard it for the first time. When Mr. Gibbons asked him this question he said:

“I don’t know where the boy is any more than the man in the moon. I was around my house the whole evening except about an hour, when I went into the back room to take a short nap; and my man Samson knows it. Just

'cause ole Ben Watson fell asleep and dreamed that we were going to kidnap him and send him off to sea, you suspect me when anything turns up."

"You are strongly blamed for everything that has happened in regard to men going off to sea," said Mr. Gibbons.

"But that ain't the kind of proof you want here," said Barlow. "You want to know I did it. You can't put your thumb on a man that I have kidnapped and sent off to sea."

That was just the trouble with Mr. Gibbons. He could not prove anything, although he was like hundreds of others in the village—he suspected Barlow had a hand in most of it.

"You ask any of these men around here," continued Barlow. "They were all around my saloon last night."

The lawyer tried by every means in his power to get Barlow to confess where he was during the hour he was absent from his saloon, but all he could gain was that he was in the back room and fast asleep. He hadn't any idea what had become of Bob Nellis. As he paused a moment in his questioning, Mr.

Sprague arose from his seat and moved into a remote corner of the room, and Mr. Gibbons followed him. The two gentlemen engaged in an earnest whisper, and finally the lawyer said :

“I haven’t got to that case yet. He is easily frightened, I know, but I want to get the dead wood on him, sure.”

Mr. Sprague was speaking of Captain Nellis, and of the scenes Barlow had witnessed on the stormy morning, which he wouldn’t tell to anybody. Mr. Sprague wanted Mr. Gibbons to take that up and question Barlow, but the lawyer was not ready to do it yet. He didn’t expect Barlow would tell the truth (he knew that he had told him a pack of lies during this examination); and although Mr. Layton was the man who was easily frightened, he was anxious to confront him with the strongest testimony.

“Well, Barlow,” said the lawyer, coming back to his seat, “you can go. I have got done with you.”

“All right, sir,” returned Barlow, putting on his hat. “I knew you would let me go

when you knew the facts of the case. I don't like the reputation I have got of kidnapping men and sending them off to sea. It will take me years to get out of it."

"It will probably stay with you as long as you remain in this village," said 'Squire Sprague. "And understand, Barlow, this isn't the last of it. You may be summoned to appear before me again at any time."

"Very good, sir. Whenever you want me you know where to find me."

The lawyer had not taken more than an hour with his examination, but the court-room was crowded, not only with Barlow's friends, but with those who were anxious to know what had become of Bob Nellis and Ben Watson. Barlow crowded his way through them without receiving a smile from anybody, and in a few minutes gained the street.

"I hope that man, ole Ben Watson, is where he will get his pay for dreaming that thing about me," said Barlow. "I may be summoned to appear again at any time, may I? Well, he can't hear any different story from me than what he has heard already. If

I knew where Bob Nellis was I'd tell him in a minute."

Among those who heard about Bob Nellis's and Ben Watson's disappearance was one who was utterly confounded, and did not know whether he stood on his head or his heels when he listened to it. It was Gus Layton, who had come down to the post-office for his mail, his father having taken a good deal to staying around the house of late. It was told to him by one who was as mean as himself—a boy who could not keep a secret if he tried. He was to the village what Simpson was to the academy.

"Ah! Gus, good-morning to you," said he. "You have been back some time, but I haven't seen you before. Clifton is in an uproar this morning, isn't it?"

"I noticed that something was up," replied Gus, "and everyone looks at me as though I had some hand in it. What's up?"

"You didn't have a hand in it, did you?"

"In what?"

"In sending Bob and Ben off to sea."

"Why, I don't understand you."

“Didn’t you know that those two men had gone to sea? Well, they have. They went last night, and never said good-night to anybody. They have had Barlow down to the ’squire’s, examining him, but I’ll bet they didn’t get at the truth of the story. You are all right now, ain’t you?”

Gus was thunderstruck at first, but as he listened to the story—some meagre outlines were all the boy could tell him—he felt like yelling and dancing a hornpipe; but knowing that that wouldn’t do, he held his peace and gazed down at the ground very solemnly. He said he was sorry, for Bob was not cut out for a sailor, expressed himself as being glad that his father and mother were gone, so that they couldn’t hear of it, and then got his mail and turned his steps homeward.

“And this will be my home, now, forever,” said Gus, hardly able to control himself. “Bob and Ben are gone, and there will be no one to interfere with me. I guess I had better go and get those ponies the first thing I do. He probably left them at the livery-stable, and they won’t want to take care of

them, now that there is no one to pay for them. Hoop-pe! I am in luck."

He kept up a slow and dignified tread, and walked with his head down as long as he remained on the street, for fear that somebody was watching him; but the moment the gate closed behind him, and the bushes shut him off from all pedestrians on the road, he broke into a run, made his way up the steps and into the hall. Giving his hat a fling at the hat-rack, he went into the library, the door of which he closed and fastened.

"Why, Augustus, have you taken leave of your senses?" asked his father.

"I have got the best news you have had for many a day," whispered Gus, drawing a chair up beside his father. "No more hard work for either of us. Bob Nellis and old Ben Watson were kidnapped last night and sent to sea."

Mr. Layton, who had been in the act of unfolding a paper, dropped it into his lap and turned paler than usual. He gazed at Gus, but had nothing to say.

"They have had Barlow before the 'squire's

court, but didn't make anything out of him," added Gus.

"Augustus, are you crazy?" said his father.

"I never was more sane than I am at this minute," replied Gus. "I feel as though I should fly. Here's just the way it happened."

Gus went on and told the story just as he heard it from the boy in the post-office. There wasn't much to tell, of course, but it was enough to make Mr. Layton see that his troubles were ended for the time being. He even smiled, and that was the first effort Gus had seen him make in that line since he came home.

"I am very sorry to hear that about Bob," said Mr. Layton, with a long-drawn sigh.

"So am I," said Gus. "They will treat him dreadful. But Barlow is true-blue," he added to himself. "If he had told what happened there in his house before Mr. Sprague came in he would have got father and me in a dreadful fix." Then he said aloud: "But, father, there are those ponies. There will be nobody to pay for their board, and I might as well have them as anybody else."

“Where do you suppose he left them?”

“At the livery-stable.”

“Well, let us wait a little while. We mustn’t be too quick to take advantage of Bob’s absence. Now, Gus, suppose you leave me alone for a short time. I am sure I can’t get over this. You’re sure they are gone?”

“As certain as I can be,” replied Gus, earnestly. “The whole village is in an uproar, and I couldn’t make out what it was until this boy told me. I declare, that Bob Nellis has got more friends than I ever had. I’d like to see how many he’ll get on shipboard.”

“Augustus, I am surprised at you,” said his father.

“Well, father, if you had been in my place, and taken all the abuse I have, you would say the same thing,” replied Gus. “Of course he will have more enemies than he’s had here, and there won’t be anybody to toady to him because he is the son of the wealthiest captain in Clifton. Well, if you want to be alone I’ll go away for a little while. I know what you want,” he added, in an undertone. “You want to be alone, so that you can gloat over

Bob's disappearance. Now, I will go down and see about those ponies the first thing I do."

Gus found his hat on the hall floor, put it on and struck up a lively whistle as he bent his steps toward the gate; but as soon as the gate closed behind him and he began to meet the pedestrians on the street he cut short his whistle and walked along with his gaze fastened on the ground. It seemed as if everybody he met looked at him with a sidelong glance, as if to say that they knew he was in some way responsible for Bob's disappearance. Probably his guilty conscience had something to do with it. After a few minutes he reached the stable, and he knew by the looks of the men that the news had got around there also. They were all angry about something, he could see that plainly enough.

"Halloo, Gus!" exclaimed the proprietor as he came in. "You are clear of your cousin now, at any rate."

"So I have heard," said Gus. "He has gone off to sea and never said a word about it. Do you know where he is?"

"Do I? I guess you had better go aboard the J. W. Smart, and you will find him there."

It was plain that Gus did not want to talk to the livery-stable keeper too much. It was evident that he had something back of it.

"Did Bob bring some horses here yesterday for you to take care of?" he asked, going into his business at once.

"He did," replied the proprietor.

"Well, now, there isn't anybody to pay for their keeping—"

"Oh, yes, there is. Bob paid for them for a whole month."

"A whole month! Then he must have known that he was going away."

"No, I don't reckon he did. Did you want to take the ponies and take care of them? You will have to see Mr. Gibbons about that. He is the man who stands closer to Bob than anybody else. Besides, Bob will be back some day, and I want to turn his horses over to him in just as good condition as when they were received."

"Then I had better get an order for them."

"Exactly. That's the way for you to do."

“It beats the world, but you can’t throw a stone in any direction without hitting one of Bob’s friends,” said Gus, as he turned and left the stable. “Everybody is friendly to him. Might be clear of my going to Gibbons for that order. The ponies can stay there until they die of old age before I try to get them out. But he says Bob was going to come back some day. That bothers me worse than anything else.”

Gus walked briskly away, as if he were going to the lawyer’s office, but when he had turned three or four corners and got out of sight of the stable he bent his steps toward home.

CHAPTER XVI.

A SAILOR IN SPITE OF HIMSELF.

AND where were Bob Nellis and old Ben Watson all the time that this uproar was being raised in the village? They were on board the J. W. Smart, and two hundred miles at sea. We confess that we do not like to accompany Bob on the water, for there were many interesting things that happened during the next few months to which we had rather devote our attention. We know by experience that it is the meanest and most miserable life that a boy ever entered into. The second mate of the Smart was a brutal fellow, and he more than once hazed the men till they were on the point of jumping overboard.

Bob's blow could not have been so severe as the one which knocked Ben Watson down, for he had no sooner been tumbled into his

bunk than he came to himself. All that Joe Lufkin had done, and the sailors working over him to get him aboard, was lost upon him. He was untied, the gag was gone from his mouth, and he was at liberty to throw his arms about as he pleased. He raised himself upon his elbow and looked about him. At first he did not know where he was, but the unsavory smell of bilge-water that saluted his nostrils told him that he was in the forecastle of a ship that was outward bound. He could easily tell that by listening to the hoarse commands and the sounds of hurrying feet over his head. Then he thought of Joe Lufkin, and felt of the lump behind his ear.

"I have been shanghaied," said Bob, lying down again and covering his face with his hands. "And that Joe Lufkin is at the bottom of it. I am not a sailor, and I don't want to learn to be one. If I get a chance I'll jump overboard and drown myself."

The forecastle was dark, but Bob thought he could easily find his way to the door. Slowly and cautiously he let himself out of the bunk, and then his ears told him that

there were three other men fast asleep, and waiting until the whiskey they had taken had died out. Of course, men who were dead drunk couldn't be expected to handle a ship.

"My goodness, I wonder if old Ben Watson is here!" said Bob. "I am going to find out, for I couldn't think of going away and leaving him."

With trembling hands he began feeling in one of the bunks, searching for Ben's whiskers. He was certain that he could recognize them anywhere. The first fellow proved to be a moustached man, but with no whiskers at all on his chin, and as Bob was about to turn away to begin an examination of the occupant of the next bunk there came a warning from the man he had just left. A sinewy arm shot out and a fist shot close by his head; but Bob was just out of reach.

"Shay!" exclaimed the proprietor of that fist, in maudlin tones, "you just want to keep your hands away from me! Hear me, don't you? I've got money, but you ain't a-going to have it!"

"And it is mighty little you will find about

your clothes when you wake up," added Bob, who felt sick at heart. "Somebody has been through you before this time. I declare, here's Ben. Wake up and speak to me, Ben!"

But Ben was past speaking to anybody just then, and Bob leaned against the bunk which contained his companion and for a moment gave himself up to despair. He could not think of saving himself while Ben was in danger. And the worst of it was, there was Joe Lufkin, a man whom nobody had ever suspected of treachery, to blame for it all.

"What will the folks at home say to him if they find it out?" said Bob, fairly shuddering when the thought came into his mind. "He'll have to go to State's prison, sure, or else run away and hide himself. And what will Hank do? But I mustn't let this weakness get the start of me. It will kill me. I must go to work."

Bob had scarcely come to this conclusion when a key grated harshly in the lock—that showed Bob that he could not have got out if he tried it—and a hoarse voice shouted:

"Jones, show yourself on deck."

“Jones isn’t here, sir,” said Bob, looking around. “If he is, he’s asleep.”

“He is, eh!” shouted the voice. “And who are you?”

“I am Bob Nellis, sir.”

“Well, I’ll Bob Nellis you if you don’t come out of that in less time than you can say ‘scat!’”

As Bob afterward learned, Barlow had shipped him under the name of Jones. Of course he did not know that at the time, but still he did not delay obeying the order to show himself on deck. Just as he reached the top of the ladder a man standing there dealt him a severe blow, and as Bob gathered himself up—for he was knocked flat—shouted:

“I am second mate of this ship, my hearty. Take that for your impudence. Fore-top-mast stay-sail halliards.”

Fortunately Bob was acquainted with a good many ropes, and knew where to go to find them. He did not understand what he was expected to do with the halliards, but he staggered to the foremast and uncoiled the rope just as the crew came hurrying forward to

hoist the stay-sail. While he was hauling with the others he made out to cast a glance over the fife-rail. The night was pitch-dark, there was a heavy breeze on, and the J. W. Smart, propelled by a favorable wind, was doing her best to make an offing before the storm, which had been threatening them all the afternoon, came up. But when the storm came up it proved to be a mere capful of wind the bulk of the tempest having passed to the northward of them. It became necessary to shorten sail, and Bob, being always in the way, received many a kick and blow therefor, and it was two o'clock before he was permitted to go below. He had no clothes for his empty bunk, but he turned in and slept soundly in spite of his gloomy thoughts, for he was utterly exhausted. At the first peep of day he was awakened by the hoarse voice of the second mate, and, recalling his last night's experience, lost no time in throwing on the few clothes he had taken off before lying down and hurrying to the deck. Almost the first man he saw when he reached the head of the ladder was old Ben Watson. The recognition was mutual, but

before Bob could speak to the old sailor Ben gave him a meaning gesture and turned away. Bob was overjoyed to find that his friend had so easily got over the blow that made him a prisoner on board the *Smart*. Here was just what he needed in his helpless situation—a person to whom he could go for sympathy and advice; one who would teach him his duty, and thus enable him to avoid the kicks and blows of the second mate.

“Wait a while before you tell me your story,” whispered Ben. “I know how you came here, and if I ever get back to Clifton I’ll get even with that Joe Lufkin.”

“Here, too,” said Bob, in the same cautious whisper. “He has swelled your head up awfully.”

At breakfast Bob met the two men who had been sleeping off their potations the night before. They felt mean and sneaking indeed, but like old sailor-men they knew that they must accept what the fates had in store for them.

“Look at that,” said the one who had struck at Bob the night before; and as he

spoke he pulled out his ditty-bag to show that it was empty. "I had two hundred dollars in good and lawful money in that bag when I went ashore, and where is it now? I am wholly to blame for it. If I had placed my money in the bank, where I determined I would put it when I left my vessel, I would have had it now."

"Do you know who put you here?" asked Bob.

"No, I don't. The last I remember is of lying down in a dark alley and going to sleep. The next thing I knew I found myself in my bunk. I tell you, whiskey is a bad thing for sailor-men."

"I will bet Barlow had a hand in that," said Bob. "He is always on the lookout for a scheme like that."

"Who's Barlow?" asked the man.

"He is the man who is responsible for sending me and my friend off to this vessel. He hired a man to knock us down."

"Well, I wish I had been myself and that somebody had tried to knock *me* down," said the sailor, doubling up his huge fist and

bringing it down on the deck with a sounding whack. "I'll bet you I wouldn't be here now."

"Fo'castle, there!" shouted a voice at the head of the ladder. "You have got done eating or you couldn't pound the deck that way. Come up here and prepare to straighten up."

The men responded "Aye, aye, sir!" and although some of them had not had time to taste their breakfast, they set down their kits and hastened to obey the order. When Bob was going up the ladder the second mate laid his hand on his collar.

"See here, Jones, I will give you an easy job," said he. "Go back and gather up all the dishes that are left in the fo'castle and take them to the doctor, and help him until I call for you."

"Very good, sir," replied Bob.

He knew that the "doctor" was the cook of the vessel, and it would be new business to him to help the cook. He was a fat, jolly man, and seemed to be as good-natured as the second mate was cross and surly. He went into the fore-castle and began gathering up the

dishes, and when he thought that the second mate had gone forward to superintend the men he thrust his hand into his pocket and pulled out his wallet.

“Thank goodness that is safe,” said he, running over the bills to make sure that they were all there. “It is all in my wallet, with the exception of the twenty-six dollars that I paid to the livery-stable keeper for the keeping of my ponies. I tell you, Joe Lufkin didn’t know how much money he was handling when he knocked me down.”

“Hi yah, boy!” exclaimed the doctor, as he came into the galley with his arms full of dishes. “Has you been detailed to help me?”

“Detailed,” said Bob. “That sounds as though you had been in the service.”

“Thank goodness, I was dar,” replied the doctor. “I belonged to General Potter’s brigade, an’ was in the Fifty-fifth Massachusetts when we marched into Charleston. Every one of us used to be slaves. Yes, sar; I was dar.”

“Then you won’t be very hard on me,” said Bob. “My father used to command a gun-

boat during the war, and my friend used to be boatswain's mate of her."

"Say, look here, boy." The doctor tiptoed to the door, thrust his head out to make sure there was no one within hearing, and then stepped back again. "You ain't got no business here. I saw you ashore yesterday, driving a span of ponies. Did dem ponies b'long to you?"

"Yes, they are mine, although a relative tried to cheat me out of them."

"I wonder if you ain't that boy in Clifton that everybody is making so much fuss about?" said the darky. He glanced out of the galley window and saw the second mate approaching, and that made him change his tune. "Dar, now, put dem dishes right down dar an' den go back an' get the balance. You hear me?"

Bob went out, and in two more trips brought the dishes all in. The next thing was to wash them. It was not a very agreeable job, for the dishes were greasy, and the cook did not wash them as though he intended to get the grease all off. He found a cloth, to which the darky

directed his attention, and forthwith proceeded to wipe them.

“You’ll have to handle your fingers a little more easy than that, ’cause we’s bound to go to work an’ get dinner right away,” said the cook; but by this time the second mate had gone away and he began to speak in his ordinary tone of voice. “You mustn’t think hard of anything that I say to you while the second mate is around. I don’t feel that way toward you at all.”

“I know you don’t,” replied Bob. “That second mate acts as though he hadn’t been well brought up.”

“Well, we’ll never mind him. Is you the boy they have been taking all the money away from? If you is, you ain’t got any business here.”

“Yes, I guess I am the one you have reference to. I was kidnapped by one I had no reason to fear, and brought aboard this ship insensible.

“’Fore de land! I never heard of such doings before. An’ you did not sign the articles?”

“I never saw them. I don’t know where the vessel is bound.”

“If I was in your place, boy, I’d desert.”

“That’s what I mean to do, although I haven’t said anything to my friend about it. Do you know the first port at which we will touch?”

“No, I don’t.”

“Do you mean to say that you signed the articles and never noticed which way the ship was going?” asked Bob, in astonishment.

“Yes, sir, I done just that. You see, I can’t read writing.”

If there was anything for which Bob blessed his lucky stars it was that Barlow did not ship him under the rate of an able seaman, but had told the second mate, when he came aboard to get his advance, that he was a landsman. This was the reason the second mate gave him a place in the galley. The work was steady; he did not have a moment’s time to sit down, but it was comparatively easy, and he was in no danger of getting blows from some one without knowing what they were for. Once, during the day, he heard the call for all hands

to shorten sail, and when the cook dropped his frying-pan, which he was washing, and rushed out on deck, grabbed a rope and laid out his strength upon it, Bob was close at his heels, although he did not know where the rope led to. At the end of an hour the work was done, and the doctor went back to his dish-washing and Bob put more wood in the stove.

“Dat’s right, boy,” said the cook, encouragingly. “Whenever you hear the call ‘All hands,’ you drop everything you’ve got in your hands an’ grab a rope an’ pull the best you know how. Then the mate won’t have no cause to whack you.”

“There is one thing I would like to speak about,” said Bob, first making sure that the second mate was not anywhere around. “Do they have such a thing as a slop-chest aboard this ship?”

“No, they don’t. They have ’em aboard the whale ships that are going out for a three years’ cruise, but they don’t have ’em here.”

“Then I don’t know what I am going to do. I didn’t have any bundle when I was

brought aboard, and how am I going to provide clothes for my bunk?"

"Hain't you got any?"

"Not a thing. The bunk is just as bare as the floor."

"Well, I reckon I can give you some. It won't be much, but it will be enough to keep you off'n the boards."

This much was settled, and Bob breathed easier after that. He would get a good night's sleep, anyway, provided the mate didn't find it necessary to shorten sail too often. All that day Bob was kept busy in the galley, and when the dishes were washed up after supper he was done for the day. The cook filled his pipe and went out for a smoke, and Bob strolled out to find Ben Watson.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DESERTERS.

“**A**H! Here you are,” said Ben, who had moved up as close to the galley as he could get. “You have come to hear how I got aboard this craft, haven’t you?”

“Where did you get your pipe?” asked Bob, seeing that Ben was puffing industriously at a well-blackened briar-root which Bob had never seen him use before.

“I got it of one of the sailors,” said Ben. “Say, Joe Lufkin didn’t bring you aboard here in broad daylight?”

“No, he did not,” replied Bob, indignantly. “He waited until after dark, and then knocked me down.”

“Well, he brought me off here before noon,” said Ben, who got so angry when he spoke of the circumstance that it was all he could do to make himself understood. “He

knocked me down in daylight and brought me here."

"Why, how did that come? I didn't suppose there was a man in the world that could do that to you."

"He did it, and he did it as slick as grease, too," said Ben, pulling off his hat and digging his fingers into his hair. "Oh, don't I wish I could see that man now!"

With this introduction Ben went on and told the story of his capture. There wasn't much to tell, of course, for he did not remember a thing after he permitted Joe to come close to him. The next thing he knew he was in the bunk in the forecastle, with an aching head and a stomach that was parched for water.

"I've got over that now, and I am all right again," said Ben. "I only wish I was sitting on my own porch."

"That man must have a power of muscle," said Bob, who was astonished at the ease with which Ben had been captured. "But I don't know but he made a prisoner of me just as easy. I was standing just inside of the gate

looking for you, and he said there was something he wanted to speak with me about, and when I turned to lead him to the porch, that was all I knew. I wonder what Hank will say when he knows what his father has been guilty of?"

"We don't care for Hank," said Ben, hotly. "His father has been guilty of murder in the first degree, and we'll jug him for that. But first I must have the opportunity of pounding him. I'll prove to him that Ben Watson ain't the easy man to get away with that he supposed."

"I don't know that we can arrest him for murder in the first degree," began Bob, smiling when he thought of such a thing.

"I'd like to know if he wasn't guilty of murder when he sent us off here?" said Ben. "How did he know but that the mates would knock us overboard if they got half a chance? How did he know but that they would haze us until we would be glad to go to Davy Jones's locker? I tell you one thing, Bob, the mates ain't half so bad as folks allow. I believe we will be treated all right as long

as we do our duty. The mates are down on anything that looks like sojering, but they will do fair if we only jump when we hear the word. They have a crew of sailor-men here, and they know it."

"Why, then, you ain't going to desert?" said Bob.

"Yes, I am, if you will go; but if you won't, I won't. Let me tell you: This vessel has a miscellaneous cargo aboard, and is bound on a trading voyage among the islands of the South Pacific. When we strike one of those islands we'll skip."

"That's me. I wish we were there to-night."

"Don't the darky treat you all right?"

"Yes; but I am not used to being ordered around by such a fellow as that second mate. But still I have got to take what is in store for me."

"That's sensible. Do whatever you are ordered, and don't make any fuss about it. I will put myself out to give you an insight into your duties, and, as we belong to the same watch, I will promise to be on hand

whenever I can to assist in any work you may have to do. I'll keep you out of the hands of the mate."

"By the way, Ben, have you any clothes for your bunk?"

"I have," replied the old sailor. "I got them of some of the men, and I guess I shall have to go to them to get a change of duds, for there is no slop-chest aboard."

"I got some of the cook. I wonder what my father would say if he knew where I am? I promised that I would never go to sea, and here I am, a sailor in spite of myself."

"Your father didn't know that you had some enemies at home who would help you go to sea," said Ben. "If he had, he might have told you to look out for them."

If time and space would permit we might tell of many interesting and some thrilling events which happened during the next few months, all of which Bob witnessed, and in several of which he was the principal actor; but when one reads a story of the sea it is like telling it over again. The sailors were treated on this voyage no worse than they

were on any other voyage they ever made—not even during the hurricane off the Mauritius, when a belaying-pin from the mate's hand and a sailor disappeared at the same time and were never heard of afterward. It was an accident, and the second mate so reported it; but such "accidents" did not happen every day, and Bob, who saw the whole proceeding, was anxious to get out of the power of such a man. But such incidents as these must be hurried over, because they have no bearing on our story. It will be enough to say that the J. W. Smart passed the Cape, went safely through the hurricane of which we have spoken, and a few days later made her first stop at a small, uninhabited island, to refill the water-casks, which the captain had emptied to lighten the ship during the gale.

It was night when they got there, and Bob and old Ben, who stood the first anchor watch, seriously discussed something they had often talked of during the voyage—desertion. They did not decide upon anything definite that night, but Ben promised to think it over and be ready on the following morning with

a plan that would surely succeed. This assurance enabled Bob to carry to bed with him a lighter heart than he had known for many a day.

"Doctor, I'm going off now," said he, as he met his friend and ally in the galley. The negro had often talked to him of desertion, and sometimes, when Bob thought it too hard to undertake, he had always gone to work to cheer him up.

"'Fore de land!" he exclaimed, rolling the whites of his eyes up in delight. "But I ain't seed you get in de boat yet."

"No, but I am going to get in one when it is called away."

"Yes; but do you know what de mate will say to you when he sees you in that boat? He say: 'Here, you boy, you can't pull an oar alongside of them big fellers. You get out and let a white man get in dar.' Yes, sir, dat's what he will say to you. My only trouble is that he will want you to help me, an' won't let you go off."

Early the next morning, after a hasty breakfast had been disposed of, the order was

given to hoist out the water-casks, and while it was being obeyed Ben found opportunity to whisper some instructions to Bob.

"As soon as the casks are in the water a boat will be called away to tow them up the creek," said Ben, "and you and I must be two of the crew. While the casks are being filled we'll watch our chance and slip away, one at a time, and hide in the bushes until the ship sails."

"And what will we do then?" asked Bob. "Stay here on the island and starve to death? I see no signs of inhabitants."

"Neither do I; but I would rather starve ashore than be sent overboard by a belaying-pin, as that fellow was served off the Mauritius. No one has said a word to me, but I know we are not the only ones who think of deserting. Be sure you make one of that boat's crew."

The first mate, who was superintending the operation of getting the casks into the water, very soon became aware that he had a boy there whom he had not seen very often during the voyage. He was an easy-going fellow,

very different from the second mate, who went about trying to find fault with the men, and pretty soon he called out to Bob:

"Here, boy, don't you belong in the galley?"

"Yes, sir," promptly replied Bob, releasing his hold upon the rope and stepping up in front of the mate.

"If you please, sar, I can get along widout him," said the cook, stepping up and pulling his topknot. "De boy hasn't been to sea so long before, an' he's anxious to get ashore an' stretch his legs."

The mate said no more, and Bob returned to his work of hoisting out the casks.

"Bully for the first mate," he said to himself. "If the second mate had spoken to me he would have sent me into the galley, sure. Now, if I can get into the boat I'm all right."

At the end of two hours the last cask had been hoisted from the hold, and while it was being lowered into the water Bob and Ben, anticipating the next order, began to overhaul the cutter's falls; and when the mate told the crew to lay aft and lower away, they sprang

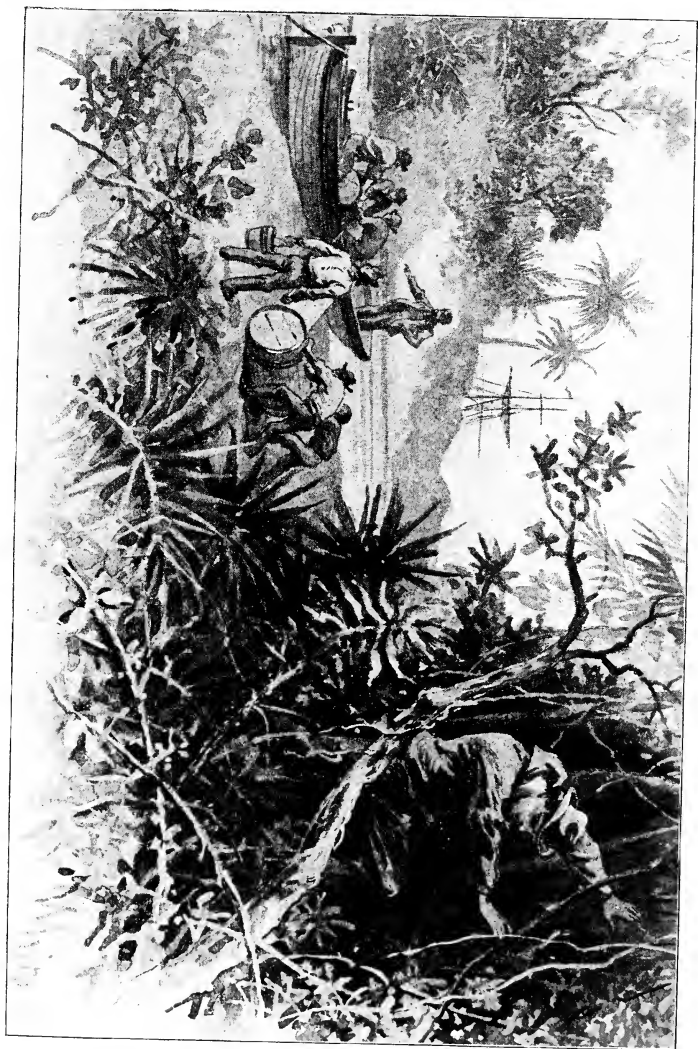
in, one at the bow and the other at the stern, to unhook the falls when she touched the water. As Ben had expected, almost every hand volunteered when a crew was called for to man the cutter—so many that the mate was obliged to order some of them back, and Ben felt not a little alarmed lest one of the brawny fellows should be ordered to take Bob's place, and the latter be compelled to remain on board. But nothing of the kind happened. The captain kept a sharp eye on him as the boat was being rowed around the vessel to the long line of water-casks, but seeing that he knew how to handle an oar he allowed him to keep his place.

Bob had always plumed himself on being a good and enduring oarsman, but on this occasion his powers were tested to the utmost. The sun was broiling hot even at that early hour; the tow was a heavy one, and the officer in charge of the boat was constantly urging the crew to greater exertions, now and then casting his eyes over his shoulder toward a bank of clouds that was slowly rising above the horizon. Bob was seaman enough to

know that those clouds might prove friends to him and Ben. There was wind in them, and when it came the ship would be obliged to put to sea or run the risk of being dashed on a lee shore.

After following the windings of the creek for a mile or more, the mate drew up alongside the bank and the work of filling the casks began. It was brackish water, as Bob found when he came to taste of it, but it would do them until they reached a place where they could get better. The officer had doubtless been instructed by his superior to keep a sharp eye on the men while they were thus engaged ; at any rate, he did so, stationing himself on the bank above them, where he could see all their movements. Bob's heart sank within him as the work progressed without any signs of decreasing watchfulness on the part of the officer, and he had almost made up his mind that he had to go back on board the ship and abandon all idea of going home, when, as he happened to cast his eye toward the upper end of the line, where Ben had been at work, he was surprised to find

THE ESCAPE.



that he was not in sight. He had found opportunity to slip away unobserved.

“By George! Ben has made it,” said he, and his heart beat like a trip-hammer. “Now, what is the reason I am not as sharp as Ben? I am going to try it. That officer can’t any more than shoot at me, and I will bet he don’t hit me if I once get inside the bushes.”

At that moment the officer was engaged in rating some of his men for what he called their “lubberly way of doing business,” and his back was turned toward Bob. It was now or never. Hastily dropping his bucket, the boy ran quickly along the water’s edge until a projecting root hid him from the sight of the mate, and then crawling up the bank he plunged into the woods. The tropical vegetation was so dense that he could scarcely work his way through it; but he made the best progress he could, unmindful of the heavy falls and severe scratches he received, and heedless of the other dangers he might run into. All he thought of was Ben’s order to get as far away from the creek as possible. He might have saved himself a deal of unnecessary

work if he had only known it, for no search was made for him. Of course the officer very soon discovered that he and Ben were gone, but he said nothing about it, knowing that if he sent his men into the woods to hunt them up he would lose every one of them. He simply redoubled his vigilance and hastened the work of filling the casks, in response to a warning gun from the ship; and when it was done he made fast to his tow and started down the creek.

Bob remained in his concealment nearly an hour, listening for sound of pursuit, and hardly daring to move for fear of guiding his enemies to his hiding-place, and then, believing that all danger was passed, made the best of his way back to the creek. When he emerged from the woods he saw the old sailor sitting on the bank, waiting for him.

"Oh, Ben, we've done it, haven't we?" exclaimed Bob, who was so excited that he could hardly speak plainly. "I couldn't feel any better if I was sailing into Clifton harbor."

"Well, I tell you, I would feel 'nough sight

better than I do now," said Ben. "Where are we going to get something to eat?"

"I am sure I don't know. I left all that for you to attend to."

"Oh, you did, did you? Well, I have got news for you. Just around the bend above here lies a little trading-vessel, and I propose we go up and see if we can ship on her."

"You don't say! That's the best piece of news you have had for me in a long while," said Bob. "And what if our own ship comes back?"

"Do you suppose that a ship is a-going to waste time in picking up two discontented hands who have deserted her?" exclaimed Ben. "Them fellows that are left will have to look out for a belaying-pin now. But there's no danger of the Smart coming back. We're going to have a worse blow than we have had yet, so far, and if the ship isn't wrecked she'll be a long ways from here to-morrow. Let's go and see what they can do for us. I declare I am almost afraid to go with you."

"Why, how is that?" asked Bob, in surprise.

“You said if you could feel the solid ground under your feet, such as you used to be accustomed to at home, you would be yourself again,” said Ben. “But you don’t look a bit different now from what you did aboard the ship.”

“That will wear off after a while, Ben,” answered Bob. “Come on, and let us see what they can do for us.”

Ben slowly arose to his feet and walked up the creek, and Bob followed close at his heels. In a few minutes they came within sight of the vessel of which the old sailor had spoken. She was riding at anchor, and her crew was engaged in hoisting a water-cask on board. There were but three white men on her deck, and the rest were all—

“Negroes, by George!” said Bob, in disgust.

“No, they ain’t. They are Malays,” replied the old sailor. “You had better be careful how you talk to them or they’ll knock you flat. I wish that second mate had this crew to deal with.”

“Why do you?”

“’Cause he’d be a little careful how he handles them, that’s why. If he got on the rampage and tried to knock them around they would turn on him and throw him overboard. We don’t want to hail the vessel while the crew is busy, so we will sit down here, and I’ll tell you something about them.”

Bob and the old sailor accordingly seated themselves on the bank, and the latter proceeded to relate short scraps of his own experience, which were of great interest to Bob, as they in some measure prepared him for the thrilling events that were so soon to follow. Among other things, Ben told his young companion that the majority of vessels trading among those islands employed Malays for foremast hands. They were good sailors, and civil and orderly enough when well treated, but they were ready to use their knives on the slightest provocation ; and, moreover, they had laws and customs of their own which everybody must respect, from the cabin-boy up to the master. Besides the three white officers who managed the vessel, the Malays had officers of their own, called the first and

second tindals, whose duties corresponded to the work of first and second mates. Did the officer on watch desire to shorten sail or change the course of the vessel, he gave the necessary order, not to the men direct, but to the tindal who was on watch with him, and who saw that the work was executed. When punishment was found to be necessary—and that happened nearly every day—the white officers did not inflict it themselves, but described the offense to the tindals, who dealt with the culprit as they saw fit. Sometimes the offender was flogged until he could scarcely move, and sometimes he was treated with mysterious indignities, which no one but himself and companions could understand. If the officers ever so far forgot themselves as to take the management of affairs into their own hands, a mutiny was the certain result.

“I tell you, a fellow has to keep his wits about him,” said Bob.

“You’re right he does,” said Ben, in conclusion. “These traders are mostly all Englishmen, and that’s one thing I don’t like

about this vessel. But it's go there or stay here, and which had you rather do?"

"Let us go aboard the vessel," said Bob. "We can't be much worse off there than we are here on shore, for these woods look as though they might be full of wild animals. You will be near enough to tell me if I do anything out of the way. This is a queer way of getting back to Clifton, ain't it?"

"Well, you are going there, all the same," said Ben. "We shall probably sail for Singapore, and that is right on our way home. We can't get there afoot, can we?"

"I should like to know if I am ever going to find my father."

"Why, of course you are going to find him. He is somewhere among these islands, and I'll bet anything on it. He wasn't drowned."

This was the way the old sailor always talked to Bob when he could exchange a word with him in private, and it did much to encourage him. He kept a close watch of the vessel while he talked, and when, at the end of a quarter of an hour, the cask was hoisted and stowed away, Ben waved his hat and shouted:

“Schooner ahoy!”

“Ay! ay!” came the answer, in gruff tones.

“We want to ship. Will you take us on board?”

“Who are you?”

“We belong to the American ship J. W. Smart, who came in here after water. She had to make an offing, and went away in such a hurry that she left us behind.”

The officers of the schooner could see no reason to doubt this story. They had come in there for water themselves, and if they had not run so far up the creek would also have been obliged to haul off shore to escape the wind that was already howling through the trees. They held a short consultation, and presently their boat was manned by two of the Malays, who came over and took Bob and Ben on board the schooner. Bob took a good look at the Malays, and told himself that he really wished he was back aboard the Smart.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A MUTINY.

BEN and his young companion at once presented themselves on the quarter-deck, where the captain was waiting to receive them, and after the old sailor had repeated the story he had made up for the occasion, and answered a few questions the officer had to ask him, they were told that they would be in the second mate's watch and were ordered to turn to, which meant go to work. They were going as straight to Singapore as they could go, and once there the castaways would be able to look out for themselves. When he concluded, Ben thanked the captain for his kindness, and then put on his hat and started forward.

“Master Bob,” said the old sailor, as soon as he had an opportunity to gain the boy's ear for a moment, “make up your mind to

one thing, and that is, we have jumped right out of the frying-pan plump into the fire."

"I was just thinking so myself," replied Bob. "These Malays are an awful set—"

"It isn't that," whispered Ben, hastily. "Do your duty faithfully and you will have no trouble with them. But this is an English craft, as I told you. I made one short voyage under this flag, and I know that greater tyrants than these Johnny Bulls never stepped. We have been supping sorrow with a big spoon so far, but we've got to take it by the bucketful now."

"Why, I thought you said these officers wouldn't dare show any tyranny around where the Malays are."

"Neither will they where the Malays are concerned, that is if they understand their business and don't take on too much red-eye, which the cap'n and his mates never go back on, judging by the looks of their noses, and me and you have got to walk a chalk-mark or take what comes. You'll see something on board this schooner that you never saw before—a man triced up and flogged like a beast.

Look there!" said Ben, jerking his thumb over his shoulder toward the fife-rail.

Bob looked, and his blood ran cold when his eyes fell upon the instrument of torture there suspended. It was a cat—he knew it in a moment from the descriptions he had often read of it. The handle was about a foot long; the lashes, of which there were a dozen or more, were cut out of stiff leather, and, to make the blows given by them more severe, they were drawn into three or four hard knots. Altogether it was a terrible-looking affair, and Bob thought, from its appearance, it had been recently used.

"Do they use that thing on these Malays?" asked Bob, shuddering, he scarcely knew why, as he returned to his work.

"Sure, and on the whites, too. That's what keeps the men straight. Be careful you don't get it over your back before you know it," was Ben's warning whisper.

As often as he found opportunity, Bob turned to look at the officers of the schooner, and he was forced to believe, with Ben, that unless their looks belied them he had not in

any way bettered his situation. They were brutal-looking men, and very overbearing, as Bob soon found, for not even on board the *Smart* had he been ordered about as he was during the hour the crew were employed in putting things to rights. Before the work was done he saw the cat in use. The negro cook was "started" by the captain—that is, he was flogged from the cabin to the deck, because he had allowed the bean soup to get smoked. The only improvement on the *Smart* was in the food, which Ben assured him was as good as any sailor ever received.

During the three days that the schooner lay weather-bound in the creek Bob had time to learn something of his new mates and become acquainted with their customs. They were all brawny, fierce-looking fellows, except the first tindal, who was a stripling scarcely older than himself; but that he was a sailor was evident from the manner in which the decks and the rigging were kept. The schooner was as neat and trim as a little man-of-war. Ben quickly worked his way into the Malay's good graces. When he made up his mind to desert the *J.*

W. Smart he secreted his whole stock of tobacco about him, and as the schooner's company had nearly exhausted their stock of the article, the old sailor freely distributed his supply among them. The Malays, in return for this, gave him and Bob a bountiful supply of bedclothing, so that they managed to fare very well, and would have been pleased with their new quarters had it not been for the dreaded cat, which they saw every time they passed the mainmast. On the third day the wind began to abate, and on the morning of the fourth the boats were got out and the schooner towed down the creek. Sail was made, and in an hour more their vessel was bounding over the waves toward Singapore.

For a time nothing exciting happened on board the schooner. Of course there was the usual amount of punishment—not a day passed that did not see the cat brought into use—and even Bob and old Ben came in for a share, the latter being knocked flat by a blow from the mate's fist, and the boy being sent to the mast-head under a broiling sun. What their offense was neither of them had

the slightest idea. The nearer the vessel progressed toward her destination the more overbearing and exacting the mates became and the closer the captain clung to his bottle, of which he was very fond. Finally he got so under the influence of its contents that he was obliged to keep his bunk for two days, and his reappearance on deck was the signal for a scene, the remembrance of which disturbed Bob's sleep for many a night afterward. It had been blowing hard all day, and at last the officer of the watch, after the main-topmast had been carried away, concluded that it would be best to shorten sail. The work had just been completed and the wreck cleared away, and the schooner was beginning to make better weather of it, when the captain staggered up the companion-way.

Bob had never before seen such a fiendish-looking man as he was at that moment. The captain seemed to be greatly enraged, and the boy knew instinctively that something was going to happen. The negro cook, who was well used to his moods, must have thought so too, for he darted into the galley and hid be-

hind the door, and even the surly second mate backed out of his way.

“What’s been a-going on ’ere?” roared the captain, glaring about as if seeking some object to take vengeance upon. “What was all that bloody crash I ’eard just now?”

“We carried away the topmast about two hours ago, sir,” replied the mate, with more civility than he usually threw into his tones when addressing his superior, “and we thought it would be best to clear up things before you came up.”

“But what was that bloody noise I ’eard just now?” repeated the skipper with an oath. “I ’eard a terrific fuss and rumpus up ’ere.”

“We have been clearing away the wreck and shortening sail, sir,” was the mate’s reply.

“You ’ave, hey? Been shortening sail without horders, hey? Don’t you know that I command ’ere? Where’s the tindal?”

“He’s below, with his watch, sir.”

“Well, I will soon snake him up and learn him not to shorten sail without horders from

me!" yelled the skipper, blundering toward the forecastle. "I command 'ere, and I'll learn you, and him, too, that it is best not to shorten sail without horders from me. I wish you wasn't an officer, and I would trice you up."

Bob and the old sailor were standing in the waist, and as the frenzied captain went staggering by, swinging his arms wildly about his head and fairly foaming at the mouth, they gave him all the room he wanted. Their efforts to avoid attracting his attention drew the savage glare of the old man toward them, and seemed to increase his fury, for Bob was sent aft with a bleeding nose and a dizzy head, while Ben ducked like a flash just in time to escape a vicious back-hander which the skipper aimed at him. The latter thundered across the deck toward the forecastle, and missing his footing at the head of the stairs, went headlong among the watch, who were eating their supper. Bob heard him swearing and storming below, and presently saw him reappear at the head of the ladder, pushing before him the first tindal, whom he

had seized by the back of the neck, and who was helpless in his powerful grasp. Close behind him came the watch, who swarmed up the ladder like bees, and were speedily joined by their friends on deck. They all looked as fierce as the skipper himself, and some of them carried their knives in their hands.

"Heaven help us, for our time has come at last!" gasped old Ben. "That drunken fool is going to be the death of us."

"Will they spare none of us?" stammered Bob. "I am sure I never harmed any of them."

"It makes no difference. The last one of us will have to go. Good-bye, Bob. Old Ben will stick to you to the last."

Bob was too terrified to move or speak again, and so he watched the captain with his unresisting prisoner. He pushed him to the mast and looked around for some one to help him. The second mate had retreated to the cabin, and Ben and Bob were the only ones near him. The skipper's eye fell upon them, although they tried to make themselves as small as they could.

“Come 'ere, you two, and 'elp me trice hup this man,” said he.

The boy at first did not move, but old Ben, always prompt to obey orders, sprang at the word; and Bob, knowing that the old sailor's judgment and experience would show him what ought to be done under the circumstances, thought it best to follow his example, although he would much rather have assisted in tying up the captain. He caught up a rope and fastened one of the tindal's hands to the shrouds, hauling down on it, in obedience to the captain's order, until the captive's toes just rested on deck.

“Now, I'll show these bloody heathen who's master 'ere!” exclaimed the skipper, snatching up the cat and panting with the violence of his exertions. “'Ere, Watson, take this and lay on till I tell you to stop. We'll learn these bloody heathen — Eh? You won't do it?”

Ben drew back a step or two.

“Cap'n,” said he, “it is something I never done, and never will do. I had rather be there myself.”

“You would, hey?” shouted the skipper, brandishing the cat in the air. “Well, we will soon have you there, and you’ll know how good it feels. Hi, boy! Call hup my two hofficers, and tell ’em to bring my pistols. ’Ere’s a bloody mutiny!”

Bob, to whom this command was addressed, ran to the cabin, but found the door fastened. He called to the mates and repeated the captain’s order, but there was no response. Had he gone to the stern and looked over, he would have found that one of the small cabin windows was open, and that the second mate was trying to squeeze his burly form through it to reach the boat that hung at the davits. The two officers knew what was likely to be the result of the skipper’s unreasonable behavior, and were preparing to leave him to his fate.

“Now, then, boy!” screamed the captain, “where are they?”

“I can’t make them answer, sir, and the door is locked,” replied Bob.

“Call louder! Tell ’em I want ’em! Knock the door down!” roared the skipper, stamping furiously about the deck. “I’m master ’ere!”

The captain bared his arm as he spoke, grasped the cat with a firmer hold, and swung it in the air; but just as the blow descended upon the tindal's back the Malays made the rush that Ben had long been expecting, flourishing knives and handspikes and yelling hideously. The old sailor, loyal to the last, threw himself in front of his officer to protect him, but was instantly stretched on deck by a blow from a handspike, and a moment later the captain lay motionless by his side. Bob gave himself up for lost. There was no place to which he could retreat for safety, and resistance was not to be thought of. He could only remain passive and await the fate he was powerless to avert. He turned away and leaned upon the rail, looking down at the water, and expecting every instant that a blow from a knife or a handspike would put an end to his existence. But nothing of the kind happened, and Bob finally ventured to cast his eye over his shoulder to see what was going on behind him.

The Malays were gathered in a group in the waist, and while some were busy binding the



THE REVOLT OF THE MALAYS.



captain the others were cutting down the tindal. While he gazed, old Ben was lifted to his feet and stood unharmed in the midst of them. No one showed the least inclination to molest him, but, on the contrary, several of the crew gave him hearty slaps on the back, which were doubtless intended to assure him that he had nothing to fear. The old sailor looked around, and seeing Bob standing beside the rail, pale and trembling, quietly joined him.

“Cheer up, my hearty!” said he. “I knew what I was doing when I refused to use the cat on that man. You and me and the doctor are safe, but all the salt in the sea won’t save the officers.”

“Oh, Ben, this is just awful!” said Bob. “What do you suppose they will do with the officers? Perhaps we might say something that would make them hold their hands—”

“Don’t you open your head,” said Ben, earnestly. “You will bring death upon yourself if you attempt it. We will never know what they are going to do with them. A man stands a poor show of life who strikes one of

these fierce fatalists. As for us, they are going to turn us adrift in a boat."

"They might as well make an end of us at once," said the boy, gazing at the angry white caps that were rolling on every side. "We can't live five minutes out there."

"When we get back to Clifton I am going to tell your father that he had better send you to school until you get your sea-legs on," said Ben, cheerfully. "A boat will live in a worse sea than this."

The first tindal having been released, the Malays held a short consultation, and then an axe was procured and the crew marched aft to the cabin. The door was quickly beaten from its hinges and the Malays rushed in. A fierce struggle followed, loud yells were mingled with the reports of fire-arms, for the mates were brave as well as brutal, and then the crew reappeared bringing with them two more prisoners, who were laid on deck beside the captain, and the bodies of three of their number, who had been stricken down by the bullets from the mates' pistols.

"There; you see how useless it would be for

us to ask them to spare their lives, don't you?" said Ben, as the three dead Malays were brought up. "It is no use in talking. If we get safe off ourselves we are going to do well. We'll know all about it in short order."

The first tindal, who was now master of the schooner, at once began to bestir himself, and Bob judged by his actions—for they had not been aboard the vessel long enough to understand any of their language—that he knew just what ought to be done. He sent some of the crew below to bring up a supply of provisions and water, and commanded two of the others to lower away the boat. As soon as it touched the water, Bob, the old sailor and the negro cook were told to get in, the Malays cut the falls with their knives, and, waving a farewell to them, the schooner dashed on, leaving the boat to the mercy of the waves. Bob thought this the worst thing that ever happened to him; but if he had been able to look far enough into the future to see what was to come of it, he would not have been back aboard the schooner for any price.

"Brace up, my hearty!" said Ben, giving

the boy a shake which brought his hands down from his face. "You are worth three or four dead men yet. This ain't any sea at all; is it, doctor?"

"No, sir; oh, no, sir," answered the cook, who saw that much depended on keeping up Bob's courage. "I was wrecked once in de Solferino, and we had to take to de boat, and—Laws! You had oughter seen dem waves. Dese ain't a patching to 'em."

"It is not so much being cast adrift in a small boat that I complain of," said Bob, "but I would like to know what is going to become of us. Here we are, miles out of the track of any vessels—"

"Oh, belay your jaw! We are miles out of the track of any vessel? We are right in their track. How long will it be before another English vessel will turn up here? There'll be somebody along directly."

"I wonder if any boy ever had as many adventures as I have had?" said Bob, running over in his mind the various dangers that had befallen since the night he was kidnapped. "If Joe Lufkin knew where I was now he

wouldn't expect to see me again. Bob, I wonder what it was that induced him to act as he did."

"Barlow was at the bottom of it," said the old sailor, angrily. "But you will see him again, don't worry about that. I don't want you to go home until you get your father."

"It is useless to think about that," said Bob, despairingly. "My father I shall never see again, so I must make the best of a bad bargain. I wish I knew what the Malays are going to do with those three prisoners. Can't we take the law on them when we get to Singapore?"

"You ain't reached Singapore yet by a mile or two," replied Ben, with a laugh, "and when we get there you'll find that the law ain't for such fellows as we are. In the first place, how are you going to prove the Malays?"

Bob stared hard at Ben, then rested his elbows on his knees and looked down at the bottom of the boat and said nothing.

"The Malays all look alike, and if you were to see one or two hundred of them

brought in, how are you going to pick out the ones that did the mischief? And you would be shut up in jail for a witness. I tell you that the best thing you can do would be to hold your jaw and say nothing."

The three castaways kept their eyes fastened upon the vessel as long as she was in sight, hoping to gain some clue to the fate that was in store for the captain and his mates, but for the next half an hour the Malays remained standing on the quarter-deck as if engaged in consultation, and finally the increasing darkness shut her out from view, and they were alone on the deep.

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CHAPTER XIX.

A FAMILIAR FACE.

HOW Bob managed to survive during that dreadful night he scarcely knew. He ever afterward thought of it as a dream, for his mind was in such confusion that he could not realize what was going on around him. Ben and the doctor managed the boat, while Bob lay stretched under the thwarts in a half-sensible condition, from which he never aroused himself until the sun arose and a joyous exclamation from the old sailor infused new life into him.

“Land, ho!” shouted Ben, seizing Bob by the leg and jerking him about. “I would about as soon see that as I would to find myself back aboard an English trader. Wouldn’t you, my hearty? Here’s land in plain sight. Get up and take a peep at it. Now we will live a Robinson Crusoe life, won’t we?”

Land was indeed in plain sight, as old Ben had declared, and Bob finally mustered up energy enough to straighten up and look about him. He relieved Ben at the oar, and the latter busied himself in overhauling the provisions to see what they had to eat; for he wisely concluded that a little something on Bob's empty stomach would go far to refresh him. He first decided to pass the jug of water (for Bob acted as though he was very thirsty), for Ben had been careful of his provisions, not knowing how soon they would strike a place from which they could get more. He was not certain that they could get any on the island toward which they were being driven with all the speed that Bob and the doctor could put into their oars, but he concluded to risk it.

"There, Bob," said he, uncorking the jug and passing it forward, "you have something to drink our health in. May your shadow never grow less."

Bob took the jug, and as he raised it to his lips he quickly put it down again and slowly got upon his feet. He could distinctly make

out the spars of a vessel that was lying in the bay toward which their boat was heading.

"Now, then, what do you see over there?" inquired Ben.

"I see a ship of some kind," said Bob, in a trembling voice.

"So you do," exclaimed Ben, after running his eye along the shore. "And she isn't a trader, either. She's one of our own vessels."

"An American?" shouted Bob. "Look again, and don't deceive me."

"She's an American, as sure as you live!" said the old sailor, after he had taken as good a view of the ship as he could get on account of the surrounding trees. "You never saw a clumsy-looking trader with such spars and such rigging as she has. Bob, give me a place at the oar, and you sit in the stern and steer as straight for her as you can go. By George! We're in luck."

Bob made the change, and for the next two hours forgot how hungry and thirsty he was. By the end of this time the vessel was within hailing distance. She was anchored in a little cove that set into the island, and her boats

were drawn up in line on the beach, where most of her crew were assembled, apparently engaged in trading with the natives.

"She is an American, I declare!" said Bob, hardly able to contain himself. "Hail her, Ben, and find out."

"Who are you and where did you come from?" asked the captain of the ship, who appeared at the side in answer to Ben's hail.

The old sailor did the talking, trying to make his long story as short as possible, and while he was speaking Bob made a thorough examination of the vessel. There was something about her that looked familiar; and after he run his eyes over her from truck to water-line, he told himself that if he had not seen that ship in the harbor of Clifton more than once, he had seen one there that looked exactly like her. Old Ben himself certainly discovered something about her to attract his attention, for he suddenly began to stammer and hesitate, and it was only by a great effort of will that he was able to go on with his story. He did not look at the man to whom he was talking, but kept his eyes fastened

upon the after-part of the vessel. Bob looked in the same direction, and saw that a bull's-eye, which probably opened into one of the cabin state-rooms, was unclosed, and that a face was pressed close to it—a pale, handsome face, with thick gray whiskers and moustache, and a pair of large black eyes which seemed to be looking straight through him. If it was the same face he had probably known in the days gone by, how changed it was! He rubbed his eyes and looked again, but the face had disappeared.

“Ben!” he cried, in great excitement.

“Avast, there!” replied the old sailor. “The cap’n’s going to speak.”

“I’ve got all the crew I want,” said the captain, “but if you have a mind to come aboard and behave yourselves you can work your passage to Singapore.”

“We’ll do our duty the best we know how, sir,” said Ben.

“All right, come aboard, then; but bear in mind that I am a sailor all over and a hard man to suit.”

“Ben,” repeated our hero, as the boat

was pulled under the fore-chains, "Ben, I saw—"

"Avast, there, will you!" What's the good of so much chin-music?" exclaimed the sailor.

"But can't I speak?" demanded Bob, greatly surprised and excited. "Ben, I tell you, I saw—"

"You saw nothing. Belay your jaw."

"But I tell you, I saw my father looking out of that bull's-eye," insisted Bob.

"Your father?" exclaimed the doctor, opening his eyes in amazement.

"Yes, sir, my father. And, Ben, he was crazy. I never saw him look so at me in his life."

"He saw his grandmother," interrupted Ben. "The boy is crazy himself, and that is what's the matter with him. His father has been under hatches for five years and better. Get aboard, doctor. Now," he added, turning almost fiercely upon Bob, "not another word out of you about what you saw if you want to keep on the right side of me. Mind that. Up you go."

Bob made the best of his way to the deck

and looked about him. Then he was certain he knew the ship. She was the *Boston*, and she had once belonged to his father. More than that, his father was aboard of her at that very moment, for he had seen him with his own eyes.

"Well, boy, what are you staring at?" demanded the captain. "Did you never see a ship before? Turn to at once, for we don't allow idlers here. Doctor, go into the galley and lend a hand there. What's your name, you graybeard?"

"Smith, sir," replied Ben.

"Well, Smith, you will find work enough with this chaffing-gear to keep you busy the rest of the day. And you, boy—"

"On deck, there!" shouted a voice from aloft.

"Fore-top," replied the captain.

"Can I have a marline-spike and about five minutes' help?" asked the voice.

"Jump up there, boy," said the captain, turning to Bob.

Our hero, having heard the request, knew just what to do. He caught up a marline-spike and ran aloft with it, and met with an-

other surprise so great that he came very near letting go his hold and going back to the deck in a much greater hurry than he went up. The sailor who was at work was an old companion and friend. He it was who had built his first model yacht and taught him to sail it on the bay, and many an hour had he passed in old Ben's cabin telling him stories of the sea. He had heard Bob promise his father that under no circumstances would he ever make a first voyage as a sailor. He had been employed by some of the country houses to do various kinds of work, but one night he disappeared, and was never heard of afterward. The most of the people believed that he had grown tired of work ashore and had gone off to sea.

"Sweet!" exclaimed Bob, hardly able to believe his eyes.

"Not a word out of you," said the sailor, glancing below to make sure that the captain was not watching. "I was glad to see you at first, but now I am sorry, for you came very near letting the cat out of the bag when you first came alongside."

“Why, Sweet, how came you here?” said Bob, lowering his tone. “Did you get tired of the shore?”

“Tired? No; I was shanghaied and sent to sea against my will, and I know who was at the bottom of it.”

“But when I came alongside I saw my father,” said Bob, earnestly.

“And Ben saw him, too, didn’t he? But he was too smart to make a fuss about it.”

“Make a fuss? I tell you, I will raise a fuss here—”

“Avast, there! You won’t raise no fuss until Ben and I say the word. If you do, you will spoil everything.”

“I don’t see that you need to fix anything,” said Bob, forgetting in his excitement that there were men below him. “My father was kidnapped and taken aboard this vessel—”

“And Ben wouldn’t let you say anything about him? That shows that his head is level. He was afraid you would say something before the captain. Here, hold fast to the end of the rope, for you must do something while you are up here or you’ll be

ordered down again," said the sailor, speaking hurriedly, as if he wished to say as much as possible in the shortest space of time. "We've got things all fixed, and you mustn't go to spoiling them for us. The cargo will be aboard at sundown, and we sail at the turn of the tide; but when we do sail your father will be in command."

"Then he *is* aboard, isn't he?" exclaimed Bob, almost overcome by excitement and delight. "I was sure of it."

"Of course he's here, but we foremast hands ain't supposed to know it. And we didn't find it out until we reached Cape Town, and then we found it out by accident. He's got five good friends—seven, now that you and Ben have come—"

"Eight," interrupted Bob, "counting in the darky that came with us. He will do anything for Ben."

"That will be enough," said the sailor. "We're going to shake out the sails when the last boat goes off this afternoon, and as soon as that is done we'll be ready to begin operations."

"But, Sweet, you have not yet told me how my father came here and what the captain is going to do with him," said Bob.

"I can't tell you what he means to do with him. Mebbe he intends to leave him to starve on some desert island, and mebbe he's going to watch his chance to knock him overboard. But he has waited too long to carry out his plans, whatever they are. He won't allow him on deck, for he says he's crazy."

"That's just what I was afraid of," said Bob, in a despairing tone.

"Avast, there!" said the sailor.

"I tell you, I never saw him look at me with such eyes before," insisted Bob.

"I reckon you would look at a man with crazy eyes too if you were in his place. As to how he came here, that's your uncle's doings. He wanted your father's money, and not having the courage to put him out of the way himself, he hired the captain and his first mate to do the work for him. But mind you, they didn't steal him out of his house at dead of night, as they do with every man that is shanghaied."

“How did they work it, then?”

“They found him in a small boat, ten miles out at sea, and took him aboard. He was luny then; at least, the captain said so. He said he was Cap’n Nellis, that he used to own this vessel, and wanted to get up and command her, and so the cap’n shut him up. That’s the whole story in a few words, and I couldn’t make it any plainer if I should take an hour.”

“Then it seems that Barlow did not have a hand in kidnapping him? The captain found him at sea in a storm and took him aboard, and he wanted to command the vessel.”

“Yes, sir. That’s just the way the thing stands.”

“Then Barlow is innocent, and that’s what he meant when he said that he had some things in his head that he wouldn’t tell to anybody. And in order that you may know how things worked at home, I will tell you that they are going just as my uncle hoped they would. He’s got my father’s property and has literally turned me away from home.

He says my father willed it to him. But who are these friends you spoke of, and how are you going to manage to have them left on board the ship this afternoon?"

"Well, it took some thinking, that's a fact," replied the sailor, who did not much like the idea of Bob believing that his father was crazy. "First, there's the second mate, you know. He's a friend, and he'll be left in charge this afternoon. The only way I could manage to stay aboard was to sprain my wrist so that I couldn't pull an oar, and I had to be put on light duty. All gammon, you know, but I didn't know what else to do. Then there's our doctor. Of course he'll be aboard, for he will be getting supper. The others are Bret and Jackson. As they belong to the long-boat's crew, it was a safe thing to bet that they would be ashore when we wanted them aboard, so what did they do this morning but get up a sham fight and draw knives on each other. Of course they are in double-irons in the fore-castle, and they'll stay there till we want them."

"Fore-top there!" shouted the captain. "It

does not take two of you to splice a rope, does it? Lay down, boy."

"Aye, aye, sir!" replied the sailor, as Bob prepared to descend to the deck. "Keep your eyes open, but say nothing to nobody. Things are all fixed, and you will see your father this afternoon. But I say, Bob," added Sweet, hastily, "it would be better for you to let go all holds and fall down to the deck head first than to go into the presence of the cap'n with that face you have got on now. If he finds out who you are, or you give him any reason to suspect you, he'll knock our plans higher'n the moon."

Bob's exultation and impatience were so great that he could scarcely contain himself—exultation to know that he was within speaking distance of his father, from whom he had been separated for almost nine dreary months; to know that he must not see him until others gave him permission to do so, and impatience to have the time wear away so that he could throw himself into that father's arms. You can imagine how you would have felt under the same circumstances. Bob believed that

his father was crazy; and if that was the case, all their arrangements for rescuing him were "knocked higher'n the moon." He was obliged to keep his feelings under restraint and be constantly on his guard, lest his thoughts should find expression in his face and be seen by some one who would not know how to interpret them.

The afternoon moved along on leaden wings. That nothing had yet happened to endanger the success of the plans that had been formed for the release of Captain Nellis was evident from the encouraging glances which Sweet and old Ben bestowed upon our hero every time they met him. It was plain, too, that somebody had found opportunity to tell the second mate who Bob was, for once, when nobody was looking, the officer slipped something into the boy's hand, and told him in a whisper to hold himself in readiness to use it. It looked like a broken key, and Bob, not knowing what it was or what he was expected to do with it, showed it to Ben and asked instructions.

"It's the key to the irons on those fellows in the fore-castle," whispered the sailor. "Keep

your eye on the mate, and he will tell you when to use it."

"But Ben, I am sure that my father is—"

"Belay your jaw, will you? I have a good notion to knock you overboard! When the old man comes on deck you will find him able to take command. Now, don't say anything more about his being crazy."

Three o'clock came at last, and the order was given to shake out the sails. It was accomplished in very much less time than usual, and then the boats all put off for their last trip to the beach, the captain and the first mate going with them, and leaving no one but the mutineers aboard. The second mate stood leaning over the rail watching the boats, and when they touched the beach he made a sign to Bob, who darted into the forecastle.

"Halloo, here!" exclaimed one of the sailors, as Bob made an effort to unlock his irons. "Where did you come from? I never have seen you before."

"Nor have I seen you," replied Bob. "But as you are a friend of Captain Nellis', go on deck. The second mate is waiting for you."

Being freed from their irons the sailors hurried on deck, and Bob kept close at their heels. The second mate and Ben were not there, but they heard an axe used in the cabin. The next moment Captain Nellis rushed upon deck. One look at his face was enough. He was as crazy a man as Bob ever saw.

CHAPTER XX.

WHO WROTE THE CODICIL?

“**B**Y the great horn-spoon!” It was Mr. Vollar’s clerk who uttered the above ejaculation. The time was when Bob Nellis brought the valuable pearl there for his employer to pass judgment upon. If we were to say that the man was astonished we should but hardly express his feelings. He was in the back part of the store, making out some accounts against his customers, and of course he heard all that passed between Mr. Vollar and the boy who had come there to see him. When Bob was offered two hundred dollars for his pearl and the jeweller opened the safe to take out the money, he laid his pen upon his desk and settled back in his chair in speechless amazement. He could not see what passed between them, for he was at work behind a board partition; but his ears

told him just what happened at the counter. He knew when Bob received the money, heard him say that Hank Lufkin would be almost overcome, and then go out.

“By the great horn-spoon!” said the clerk. “If that worthless little jackanapes hasn’t struck it at last, I’m a Dutchman. Who would have thought that he could have found a pearl worth two hundred dollars! I declare, it beats me.”

Sam Houston, for that was the clerk’s name, had a great desire to be rich. He was getting only a dollar a day for his services in the store, and that much money did not go very far toward relieving his actual necessities, to say nothing of his getting a horse and buggy of Mr. Jones every Sunday afternoon for the purpose of taking an airing in the country. He had held that position for almost two years and he saw little chance of promotion. It was the same thing over and over every day, and although he kept a bright lookout for other chances outside of the store, nothing seemed to present itself. He remembered how he used to envy Bob Nellis, with his

rich father, but when the report got around town that Bob had been cast off, and that his cousin had taken his place, then he used to cast envious eyes upon Gus Layton.

"That's always the way it is with everybody," said he; and one would think that he had been cheated out of the money instead of Bob Nellis. "All the fellows in the world can get rich instead of me. Don't I wish I had some rich uncle to die and leave me a pocketful of rocks? But then I wouldn't stay here, I bet you. I would go to New York, where I could put on style."

To make matters worse, Sam Houston had got in the way of going in debt. Mr. Jones had hinted rather pointedly that he would be glad to have that seven dollars and a half that he owed him the next time he came around after a horse, and there were half a dozen other creditors who were getting alarmed for their money; and by counting it all up on his fingers Sam made it out that he owed fifty dollars there in Clifton, and he did not know where in the world it was to come from. And here this ragamuffin, this

son of a man who was too lazy to go into the hay-field on account of wounds which he must have forgotten long ago, was getting rich in spite of him.

"Now, I say that that way of doing things isn't right," said the clerk, with a good deal of petulance in his tones. "What I owe is a mere pittance to what this boy is going to get for picking up a stone that came in his way, and he will be so lordly that he won't look at anybody else; and here I am—"

He picked up his pen again and went to work at the accounts with alacrity. He heard Mr. Vollar's step, and that proved that he was coming back to see how he got on with them.

"I guess I shall have to get some more money to carry on my business," said he with a smile.

"I should say you had," replied Sam.

"Who would have supposed that boy, Hank Lufkin, would have struck it so rich?" his employer continued. "I declare, it kind o' takes the wind out of my sails. Of course you heard what passed between Bob Nellis and myself?"

"Of course I did, for I could not help it. I was as much astonished as you were."

"Well, you won't say anything about it?"

"Oh, no, sir. Bob evidently wants to keep it still, and so would I if I were in his place. Do you suppose that Bob will put that money in the bank to his own account?"

"Certainly he will. Everything depends upon keeping it from the knowledge of that lazy father of Hank's. If he ever gets hold of it he will raise heaven and earth but that he will have it all; and if he once gets his hands on the money, that will be last of it."

Mr. Vollar looked over some of the accounts that had been made out, put them into his pocket, and left the store. When the door had closed behind him the clerk put down his pen and once more settled back in his chair, with his hands in his pockets.

"That is just what I was afraid of," said he. "Bob is mighty sharp, and he is going to take care of that money. Now, had I better see old Joe about it, or what had I better do? For I want it understood that if there are any more pearls to be found on that stream I am

going to have some of them. I can easily get Joe to bring them to me, for I can tell him that Vollar doesn't begin to pay him what they are worth. Two hundred dollars! I believe if I knew there were any more pearls on that stream I would throw up my present position and become a pearl-hunter. Wouldn't I feel big, going around with money, while no one else knew where I got it?"

Here was something that Sam Houston could build air-castles on, and he was engaged in this agreeable occupation when he heard Mr. Vollar coming back. There was one question that Sam wanted to have answered, and he asked it as soon as he had a fair chance.

"Did Bob Nellis say that there were any more of these pearls where this one came from?" he inquired, as the jeweller was engaged in putting some money into the safe.

"Why, Sam, are you going out pearl-hunting?" asked Mr. Vollar, with a laugh.

"Oh, no; but I thought I would just like to know."

"There must be, because I have often been

called upon to pass judgment on stones coming from there. At least I took it for granted that they came from that stream, because I never heard of many pearls being found about here. He says there are between twenty-five and thirty scattered around, but of course he is mistaken in that. There is probably not another pearl on that stream that is worth as much as the one Bob Nellis sold me to-day. At any rate, it wouldn't pay anybody to look for them."

"And you don't know where the stream is, either?"

"No, I don't; and if I did I wouldn't tell. Bob Nellis told me that Hank didn't even tell him where it was."

"I don't care for that," said Sam to himself. "If Joe Lufkin is as expert at trailing things as he claims to be he will soon find that pearl-mine. If they are worth ten or fifteen dollars to Hank, as I think I heard Bob remark, they are worth a fortune to me. At any rate, I am going to try it early to-morrow morning, if I can find Joe Lufkin."

Sam did not do much work that day. He

shut up the store at ten o'clock and took a stroll around the streets in the vain hope of meeting Joe, and then went home and tumbled into bed. The more he thought of his prospects the brighter they seemed to become to him, and when at last he arose from his couch, after passing an almost sleepless night, he resolved that his plan should prove successful.

"You see, I have not yet decided to possess myself of any portion of Hank's two hundred dollars, which he has doubtless given into Bob's keeping, but of the pearls that are left on the shores of that stream I am determined to have my share," he exclaimed, as he pulled on his clothes. "The idea that that boy can go around all day doing nothing—I don't see it! Here I have to work and slave from morning until night, and have done so for almost two years, and never a body has said to me, 'Sam, here's a little more money than I have thus far been able to offer you. Take that, with my compliments.' Has anybody said that to me? I am done with the store now."

Filled with such thoughts as these, and

growing more and more angry the oftener they came into his mind, Sam went down and opened the store, but saw no signs of Joe Lufkin. He was getting his breakfast at home before starting out to see how his piratical scheme would work, and Hank was just about setting out for Bob Nellis's to see about depositing his money. So Sam saw nothing of them that day, not even when he closed the store at night and took a walk around the streets. The next day was the same, for Joe did not appear. He was at home building air-castles on the strength of certain schemes he had worked the night before; but Sam saw somebody else that was almost as good. It was Hank Lufkin, who was hurrying along as if his very life depended upon the use he made of the next few minutes. He was tired of running, and had settled into a rapid walk toward Mr. Gibbons's house.

"Halloo, Hank!" exclaimed Sam. "Where are you going in such haste? Hold up a minute. I would like to talk to you."

"You have not got anything interesting that I want to hear, unless you can tell me

what has become of Bob Nellis and Ben Watson," replied Hank, coming to a standstill in front of the clerk and fanning himself with his hat. "Bob was to have gone fishing this morning, but now he has gone off, and I can't find a thing of them."

"What has become of them?" asked Sam.

"That is just what I asked. The house is open, and the lamp is burning as if it was waiting for them; but Ben and Bob don't show up."

"Why, where in the world are they?" said Sam, growing somewhat interested.

"That is just what I want to know. I am going up to Mr. Gibbons's house to see about it."

"Does Mr. Gibbons know where they are?"

"No; but he is Bob's lawyer, and he will know about them if anybody does. My idea is," continued Hank, "that they have been kidnapped and sent off to sea."

"Well, if that don't beat me!" said Sam, lost in wonder. "Who do you suppose could have done it?"

"That is what I want to know. But I must go along, now, and see what Bob's lawyer thinks about it."

"One minute before you go, Hank," exclaimed Sam. "I want to speak to you about something."

"To-morrow will do just as well," replied Hank, who, being rested a little by his short pause, broke at once into a run toward Mr. Gibbons's house.

"But I want to talk to you about that pearl you found a few days ago," said Sam, desperately. "I know something about it that you had better listen to."

Hank was so amazed to find out that the discovery of his pearl, which he had so carefully guarded from the knowledge of all persons in the village, had become known, that for a moment he stopped; but remembering that he was now looking for Bob Nellis, he kept on his way by replying that to-morrow would do just as well. The clerk stood and looked at him, and then turned about and went into the store and busied himself in dusting off the counters.

“He thinks more of Bob than he does of that pearl,” said Sam to himself. “I was in hopes he would come back when I told him that, and if he had, what would I have said to him? I must make up something. So Bob has gone off to sea, has he? I never heard of a fellow who was kidnapped coming back again.”

Sam went on dusting the counters, and as he worked his thoughts were busy with that pearl, and never once reverted to the news he had concerning Bob. Any boy who lived on the sea-coast was liable to be kidnapped and sent off, but it was not every day that a fellow found a pearl worth two hundred dollars. For be it known that Sam had thought and dreamed about this matter so much that he had about decided to leave the store and go to hunting pearls. Any how, it did not take very much to bring him to some conclusion on that point.

When his employer came down Sam told him about Bob, and was utterly amazed to see the way he took it to heart. The jeweller could not believe it at first, and required his

clerk to go over it again until he learned all about it.

“I am very glad indeed that his father isn’t here to know about it,” said he, walking up and down the store. “He promised his father that he would not by any means go to sea, and now he has become a sailor in spite of himself. I’ll tell you what’s a fact, Sam: There is somebody in this town that knows all about it.”

“That’s what I have said all along,” replied Sam, who at that moment forgot that he had said nothing at all about it. “I believe Barlow knows something about it.”

“I don’t know whether he does or not; but when Mr. Gibbons starts in he is going to find something out. I tell you, lynching is too good for a man who will slip upon another and send him to sea. My goodness, I think I should die if such a trick were played upon me.”

Mr. Vollar put on his hat and went out to see what other folks thought of it, and Sam was left alone. He was left alone for almost the forenoon, in fact, for when the jeweller

came back it was to report that Barlow had been before the justice, and that all the attempts to gain anything from him were useless.

"I've got the idea, from something Gibbons said, that he is going to take Mr. Layton down there," said Mr. Vollar.

"Before the justice?" asked Sam, in astonishment.

The jeweller nodded significantly.

"Why, what in the world has he got to do with it?"

"He may not have anything to do with it, but Mr. Gibbons is going to make him tell what he knows about kidnapping people. He's got an idea that Captain Nellis was on board the Boston when she sailed, and he wants to ask Layton something about it."

"Why, the idea is ridiculous!" said Sam, more astonished than ever. "The Boston sailed that morning, but that doesn't prove that Captain Nellis was aboard of her. To my mind, you will find that Captain Nellis is a thousand fathoms deep in the sea."

"Put this and that together and see what you make of it," said Mr. Vollar. "I will

bet you that Captain Nellis will come back; and if he does, it will go hard with somebody who wrote that codicil."

"Didn't he write it himself?"

"Maybe he did, and maybe he didn't. I don't want to say so out loud, but that codicil is a glaring fraud on the face of it."

"I declare, that beats me!" said Sam, so surprised that he could scarcely get his breath. "There's lots of little things in law that a fellow doesn't think about, isn't there?"

Just then a customer came in and Mr. Vollar moved forward to wait upon him. The topic of conversation of course was what happened to Bob, and although Sam listened eagerly, he didn't catch anything that could be of use to him; for the clerk had resolved to use what he had learned about the codicil to help him along with certain schemes he had suddenly laid against Gus Layton. There might be something wrong with the pearl-mine—perhaps there were not so many pearls scattered around there as Hank had at first supposed—and if anything should happen to disappoint his expectations, would it not be

well to have that will business to fall back upon?

“By George! that has only just occurred to me, but it is two strings to my bow,” said Sam. “If one fails, the other will be sure to shoot somewhere. Now I will go to dinner and see how it looks when I come back.”

But Sam was not obliged to wait as long as that, for on his way he overtook Gus Layton, who was just returning home after his visit to the livery-stable. Gus had been there in the hope of obtaining the ponies to take care of, but found that Bob had paid for them a month's board in advance, and that the only way he could secure them was by going to Mr. Gibbons for an order. Gus was in a very bad humor, and when Sam stepped up and touched his hat to him he mentally wished him by Bob's side on board the J. W. Smart.

“How are you, Gus?” said Sam, with a cheerful attempt at familiarity.

“How are you?” said Gus.

“Oh, now, you needn't throw your head in that lofty manner,” said Sam. “You will see the day when you will be glad to speak to me.

I know something about the will that you would be glad to know. I know who wrote the codicil."

Gus stopped and stared at Sam.

"Yes. That's a clause added to the will, so that, in a few words, it doesn't make any difference how long the body of the instrument is, you can undo everything that has been done. For example—"

"I do not care to hear anything about it," interrupted Gus. "My father is the man for you to see."

"Well, I would just as soon see him as anybody, but as I thought I could see you first, I had better speak to you before going to him. Now, Gus, I know all about it—"

"Go and see my father about it," returned Gus. "I have nothing whatever to do with it."

"Well, good-bye, if you call that going. But there is no need of his knowing anything about it."

"I tell you I have nothing to do with it."

"All right. But when you speak to your father about it just remember this: Mr. Gib-

bons is talking of bringing him before 'Squire Sprague to answer some questions he shall ask him. I'll be there when he wants me, and shall be ready to tell what I know about the codicil. Good-bye."

Gus Layton was never more frightened than he was when he opened the iron gate and started up the walk to see his father. He easily found his way into the library, for the door was not locked. He discovered his father pacing up and down the room.

"Why, Augustus, where have you been?" he demanded. "I have sent all around the house and grounds for you."

"I told you I was going to go up and see about those ponies, did I not?" replied Gus. "Well, Bob has got the advantage of us. He has paid a month's board for them, and we can't get them. He wanted me to go to that old skinflint, Mr. Gibbons, for an order, but I could not see it. We haven't got quite so far down as that yet."

"You did right and proper. We have no business to go to him for anything," said his father. "But, Augustus, you look sort of

worried about something. Has anything happened to disturb you?"

"Well, yes. While I was coming up here from the livery-stable," said Gus, fixing his eyes upon his father, "Sam Houston came up and asked me if I knew who wrote that codicil."

"Who is Sam Houston, and what does he know about the codicil?" asked Mr. Layton, leaning one arm upon the mantel-piece and rubbing his hands together. His face grew a shade paler, and Gus was sure he was on the right track.

"He said you wrote it. And he said, further, that he could tell me something about it that I wanted to know. I referred him to you."

"That was all right. But what do you suppose he could have told you about the will that I don't know?"

"I don't know; but Mr. Gibbons can."

"Mr. Gibbons?"

"Yes; he is going to bring you before 'Squire Sprague. But, father, you didn't touch that will, did you?"

“What an idea! Do you suppose it would have been admitted to probate if it hadn’t been all right? Now, Gus, I am going to ask you to leave me for a while. I have some business that needs attending to. I will call you after a few minutes.”

Mr. Layton hardly waited for his son to take his leave when he threw himself into a chair and covered his face with his hands. He remained thus for a few minutes, and then got up and walked the floor.

“Oh, I wrote it! I wrote it!” he cried out in agony. “I forged Captain Nellis’s name to it. What will become of me if it is found out?”

CHAPTER XXI.

SAM IS DISCHARGED.

“SO far so good,” said Sam Houston, as he finished his dinner at his boarding-house and stood on the front steps picking his teeth. “Now, if Gus speaks to his old man about the codicil, and the father wants to know what I know about it, what shall I tell him? That, and what I am going to tell Hank about that pearl, will require a little study. However, it is all in a lifetime.”

Sam Houston went down to the store again, and shortly afterward the proprietor went to his dinner. He was gone about an hour, and then Hank Lufkin came into the store very soon after he did. Mr. Vollar was busy at something behind the board partition and Sam stepped quickly forward to wait upon him; but before he could lift a finger or utter a sound Hank broke in with:

"Now, Mr. Houston, what have you to tell me about that pearl? If Mr. Vollar has paid me too much for it, it is only right that I should give the money back. I'll do it just as soon as Bob comes."

These words operated very differently upon the two men who heard them. Sam's face grew as red as fire, and the jeweller stepped around the board partition looking his astonishment.

"What is that you had to say about that pearl, Hank?" he asked.

The boy repeated the same request he had made of Sam, adding:

"I gave the whole of my money into Bob's hands, and he has gone away and left my funds in the bank so that I can't get them; but I will make it all right as soon as he comes."

"Who told you that I had given you too much?" asked the jeweller, fastening his angry eyes upon Sam.

"No one told me so, but I couldn't think what else you had to tell me about it, and so I came to find out," said Hank, looking first

at Sam Houston and then at the jeweller. He could not imagine what had happened to make the latter so angry at the clerk.

"Well, Hank, you can go home again, and every time you think of that pearl you can tell yourself that it is worth every cent of two hundred dollars," said Mr. Vollar. "I knew what I was talking about when I gave Bob Nellis the money."

"I am glad to hear you say so," said Hank, who was greatly relieved. "You are sure it is worth two hundred dollars?"

"Not only that, but it is worth ten or fifteen dollars more. I shall surely have that much to divide with you."

"I don't know what Mr. Houston could have to tell me about it," began Hank.

"That's all right. He had nothing to tell you. You know the place where you found the pearl, and if you are wise you will keep still about it. Nobody has any right to find out where it is."

"I'll keep still about it," said Hank with a laugh. "I don't know that I can find others like it, but I can find out. Good-bye."

Hank opened the door and went out, and the jeweller leaned on the counter and looked at Sam.

"What did you have to tell him about that pearl?" said he.

"I was going to ask him where he got it," replied the clerk.

"And then what did you intend to do?" continued Mr. Vollar. "You were going to become a pearl-hunter, were you?"

"Yes, I was. I think it is mighty queer that a boy who does nothing can stumble onto a lot of money like that. I think I have as much right to it as he has."

"Well, if you want that berth you can give up the one you hold here in the store," said the jeweller, straightening up and putting his hands into his pockets. "You won't make a cent at it, I can tell you that much. But I believe you will make as much as you do here."

"Are you not satisfied with my work?" asked Sam.

"No, I am not. You don't do half that you ought to."

“Very well. Then I will leave the store.”

“All right. Make out your account, whatever it is, and I will pay you off.”

This was all that passed between Mr. Volar and his clerk, but it showed that they were of the same opinion regarding Sam seeking another branch of business. The proprietor was perfectly willing to let him go, and Sam was willing to be released from the shackles he had worn for so long without any promise of promotion. Once out of the store he was his own master. He need not get up until he felt like it; and, besides, wasn't there a pearl-mine all ready for him to work? It is true he didn't know where that pearl-mine was, but—by George! Come to think of it, he still had two strings to his bow. He would seek an interview with Joe Lufkin before the sun set, tell him what Hank had discovered, and depend upon getting it out of him.

“That's my best hold,” he muttered, as he took down the book and turned to his account. “Of course he can't get the money out of the bank, for Bob's got that shut up until he comes back, but he can demand to know

where that pearl-stream is. I tell you, that is worth thinking of."

In a few minutes the clerk had his account made out and presented it to Mr. Vollar with a receipt made out in full. It was a mighty small sum of money that he had due him, not more than three dollars and a half, but he was certain that by the time that was gone he would have a hundred times that sum in his pocket.

"There's your money, Sam," said the jeweler, picking up the receipt and looking at it. "I should be much better satisfied if you were going to leave me to go into some honorable business."

"You are not satisfied with me, and so I quit," replied Sam.

"That's all nonsense," replied Mr. Vollar, who felt some anxiety in regard to his clerk. Sam had been with him so long that he hated to have him go on such a wild-goose chase as pearl-hunting. "I know that you never would have thought of going if you hadn't been here when Bob Nellis came in."

"I must say that it gave me a show," said

Sam, who thought he might as well tell the truth and be done with it. "I know I don't stand much chance, but at the same time I may come to you with as much money as I could earn here in six months. I needn't ask you to keep this still?"

"No, indeed," said the jeweller, as if the very thought of such a thing was foreign to him. "I ain't a-going to let anybody know that you left me to go pearl-hunting. Good luck to you and good-bye."

Sam Houston left the store feeling much as a school-boy does who has been released from a long siege of study. He was a free man, and he could go where he pleased, and it pleased him just then to turn his steps toward Joe Lufkin's house. He thought he might as well make hay while the sun shone; but suppose anything should happen so that he could not get Joe to go in search of that mine? He would have to go after it himself, and he almost dreaded the experiment. He knew that the streams, as he remembered them, were all tangled up with brush and drift-wood, and he lacked a pair of boots that would re-

sist water and dirt; so what would he do if he came to a body of water that had to be explored while wading up to his knees?

"I'll get Joe to do that," said Sam, as he came within sight of the house. "Ah! There he is, sitting on the porch. Now, how am I going to get him away from there?"

Joe Lufkin was sitting in front of the door smoking his pipe. He looked surprised and alarmed when he saw Sam approaching, pulled his pipe from his mouth and partly got upon his feet, and when Sam touched his hat and said "Good day, Mr. Lufkin," the man hardly knew what reply to make. He hadn't expected to meet Sam up there, and he might know something about that kidnapping scheme and came there to talk to him about it.

"Howdy," said Joe.

"Are you very busy just now?" said Sam, although he could see for himself that Joe wasn't doing anything. "If you are not, come out here a minute."

"What do you reckon you want of me?" asked Joe. "You might as well tell me here."

"Come here to the gate so that I can speak

to you," he added. "I declare if the man hasn't been up to something," he said to himself. "I wonder what it is?"

Joe very reluctantly got upon his feet and came down the steps, but he did not neglect each step of the way to cast his eyes up and down the road to assure himself that Sam was alone.

"You have been doing something, that's what's the matter with you," said Sam.

"Look a-here, Houston, I don't allow anybody to talk to me that a-way," said Joe, growing angry.

"I am not going to talk to you about that," Sam hastened to explain. "Is Hank in the house?"

"No; there ain't nobody here but me. What do you want?"

"Do you know," added Sam, lowering his voice, "that Hank has discovered a pearl worth two hundred dollars?"

"Aw! Go on."

"Don't talk so loud. He certainly has, and Bob brought it to Vollar to say how much it was worth."

"Be you telling me the exact truth?" said Joe, who did not know whether to believe this strange story or not.

"I am, and I got discharged from the store on the strength of it. He gave the money to Bob, and Bob has gone off to sea, with nobody here to get the money."

"I'll get it," answered Joe, who grew mad in a minute that anybody should try to conceal matters from him. "I'll go up and tell 'em it's mine and I have got to have it. But how did you happen to find out all about this?"

"You can't get the money, for it is in Bob's name. I found out all about it while listening in the store. I was making out some bills, and heard every word that passed between my employer and Bob."

"Then Bob didn't give him ten dollars to go fishing with him?" asked Joe.

"Not that I know of."

"Then the little fool has been lying to me. He came home with two basketfuls of truck he purchased at the store, and said he got the money by agreeing to go fishing with Bob.

Bob must have given him some of that money to buy the grub with."

"Of course he did. And I will tell you another thing: The reason why Bob took the money and put it into the bank was so as to keep it from you. Vollar says you would raise heaven and earth to get it all."

"What right has Vollar to stick his fingers in this pie?" asked Joe, who was about as mad as a fellow could well be. "Of course I'll raise things fit to split if I don't get some of that money. You're sure you're telling me the truth?"

"I am not in the habit of lying to gain my points," said Sam, loftily, "and I am ready to prove it to you by going in search of that stream at once."

"Not much I won't go in search of that stream," replied Joe, who had by this time got so angry that he was walking up and down on the other side of the fence. "I know a trick worth two of that. When Hank comes home I'll just bounce him for that money."

"You can't get it, I tell you," answered

Sam. "Hank himself can't get it, for it is not in the bank in his name. Or else," added Sam, a bright idea striking him, "you might go to Gibbons and get some of it from him."

"What has Gibbons got to do with it?"

"He is Bob's lawyer, you know. By telling him that your wife is ill—"

"That wouldn't do at all. He would see her on the street every day."

"Well, put yourself in some old clothes and go up there. Tell him that you are mighty hard up for some raiment, and that you've got to have it. I will bet that you could get some money out of him in that way."

"The idea that that boy should earn so much money and then put it in the bank and keep me from getting it! That's what beats me," said Joe, pounding the top of the gate with his fist. "Why didn't he give it to me in the first place? Here I need new shirts and a new pair of breeches, and I hain't got no money to get them with. I tell you, that boy is going to give me some of that money."

"I tell you he can't do it," said Sam.

"The funds are in the bank in Bob Nellis's name, and Bob has got to get it. You had better try Hank or Mr. Gibbons first."

"Well, I'll think about it," said Joe.

"That's all right. Now, Joe, since I have told you about this money you must give some of it to me."

"You?" ejaculated Joe.

"Yes, me. You wouldn't have known anything about it if it hadn't been for me."

"How much do you want?"

"I want half of what you get. That's nothing more than fair."

"Well, I don't know but I will give you half. Now you had best run away, for Hank and his mother will be along directly."

Joe emphasized the order by turning about and going up the steps, and Sam stood and looked at him as if he did not know whether to take him in earnest or not. Finally he said:

"You must remember and give me half, or I will stop it all on you. I'll go to Hank and Gibbons and tell them that you want the money to spend."

"You just wait till I get that money in my hands and I'll give you half. You ought to have it, for I shouldn't have known a thing about it."

"Then you think you won't go and look for that stream now?" said the clerk, who was much disappointed in going back to the village as empty-handed as he was when he came out.

"No. I'll try Hank and Gibbons first."

Joe went into the house and walked once or twice across the floor, and when he looked out again Sam Houston was gone. Then he lighted his pipe and sat down in his old, accustomed place. He took a few pulls before he could bring his mind to bear upon the story he had heard.

"*That* for giving you half!" said Joe, snapping his fingers in the air. "The money is mine, and if I get hold of any portion of it it will all be mine. The idea that that boy should find a pearl worth two hundred dollars and then go and hide it from me! I wish the boy wasn't so big; I'd like to lick him!"

Joe was so uneasy that he could not remain

long in one position, and after a little while he got up, went to the gate, and looked for Hank and his mother. Joe did not know it, but the truth of the matter was Mrs. Lufkin and her son had gone off for a walk on purpose to be out of hearing of Mr. Lufkin. They wanted to exchange ideas in regard to Bob Nellis's disappearance, and consequently they took a longer time for their stroll than Joe approved of. After leaning over the gate for some time Joe opened it and went out.

"I don't know where they were going, but it seems to me that they are taking a long time for it," said Joe, impatiently. "I can stay here and starve, for all they would do to hurry up. I'm bound to have some of that money."

Before he had taken many steps down the road Joe saw the objects of his search, and then for the first time he began to feel his courage forsaking him. It was only the knowledge of the fact that Hank was not yet of age that kept him up, and then he braced himself and walked forward as though he had something on his mind.

"See how father walks!" said Hank. "He has found out something, or I shall miss my guess."

And he was not long in finding out what it was. His father paid no attention to their civil greetings, but placed himself by Hank's side.

"Look a-here, son," said he, and when Joe addressed him in that way the boy knew that something was coming, "what about that pearl that you found the other day?"

Hank was thunderstruck. His father knew all about it in spite of his efforts to keep it from him. He couldn't say a word.

"Because if you have found one, it isn't natural in you to hide it from me," said Joe. "You see how I want new clothes, and you had oughter give me some of the money. How much did you get for it?"

"Two hundred dollars," said Hank, who had been allowed a little time to recover his wits.

"And how much have you used?"

"Ten dollars."

"And the rest is shut up in the bank where nobody but Bob Nellis can get it?"

"Yes, sir, that is just where it is. And Bob has gone off to sea and I can't get it till he comes back."

"I don't know what makes you think that Bob's coming back," said Joe, uneasily. "If he can come back from sea his father will come, too."

"That's what I look for," said Hank. "I expect to see Bob and his father walking along these streets."

"Mebbe he will, and mebbe he won't. But that's neither here nor there. Now, Hank, I want you to give me some of the money."

"I can't. Nobody can get it except Bob."

"And does the law allow you to take any money you may find and give it to another to take charge of for you?"

"I don't know whether it does or not. I did it, anyhow."

"Well, Hank," said Joe, with a sigh of resignation, "you have undone all the good that I have done you for years. When you was a little fellow I took care of you and sent you to school, and this is the way you repay me. I hope that money will bring any-

thing but blessings to you as often as you touch it."

So saying, Joe turned on his heel and walked away toward the village, and Hank and his mother kept on toward home. When they reached the gate they turned and looked after Joe. He was walking along with his head down, and one would think he had lost the last friend he had upon earth. They went into the house, and Hank sat down in his father's accustomed place on the porch.

"Well, mother, what do you think of it?" asked Hank. When his father began to talk about what he had done for him the boy felt repentant, and almost wished that he had the money in his pocket to give him.

"You told the truth," said Mrs. Lufkin. "And you can see right where your money would go if you were to surrender it."

"But, mother, I have an idea in my head that he is going to work at something else. Why didn't he rant and swear, and go on as he usually does when he asks money of you?"

"I looked to see him do it, but fortunately he did not."

“And that’s what makes me think he is up to something. I do not know what it is, but I believe I will keep watch of him.”

With the words Hank jumped off the porch and followed down the road after his father. In a few minutes he came within sight of him. There was Joe Lufkin, walking along with his head up, and acting for all the world like a man who was going somewhere on business. He had got out of reach of his wife and son, and consequently was able to conduct himself as he always did. There was nothing at all the matter with him.

“I guess father is all right,” said Hank, as he turned toward the house. “He won’t get any money in going down there, for everybody is on the lookout for him. Now, I must get my nerve up against he comes back. He may have something more decided to say then.”

CHAPTER XXII.

THE TELEGRAM.

“**H**ANK has got it!” said Joe Lufkin, as he took long strides toward the village. “He didn’t try to lie me out of it at all. When I told him that he had a pearl worth two hundred dollars he was completely dumfounded. I reckon he’ll wonder how I found it out. He’s got it, as sure as the world! Now I’m going to try Gibbons. It can’t be that a boy can give his money into another’s hands, as Hank has done with Bob, and so shut me out of the whole of it. At any rate, that’s a point I am going to have settled.”

Joe was a rapid walker, and in due time he reached Mr. Gibbons’s steps. As he ascended them he drew on his long face again, and when he opened the lawyer’s door a stranger would have supposed that he had nothing to live for. He found Mr. Gibbons there with

his feet perched upon the desk, and he had a legal document in his hand.

"Howdy," said Joe, taking off his hat and making a profound bow.

"Why, Joe, I haven't seen you for a long time," said the lawyer. "Sit down. Did you come here to see me?"

"I reckon I can't stop long," said Joe, sitting down in a chair and whirling his hat in his hand. "I just want to tell you something."

"Well, speak out. We are here alone."

"Mr. Gibbons, that boy of mine has discovered a pearl worth two hundred dollars," said Joe.

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed the lawyer, opening his eyes. "He was lucky, wasn't he?"

"Yes, he was. Now what does this Hank do but give his money into Bob Nellis's hands, and now Bob has gone to sea and he ain't here to give me any money."

"Are you sure he put it all into the bank in Bob's hands?" asked the lawyer, who thought it was about as smart a trick as he

ever heard of. "Perhaps he's got some of it laid out somewhere."

"No, he ain't, because if he had he'd 'a' told me. Now I want some of that money, if I can get it."

"Um! Well, what do you expect me to do about it?"

"I want you to get some of it for me," said Joe, looking down at his clothes. "You can see for yourself that I want a new shirt and a new pair of breeches."

"I don't see that you do," said the lawyer. "Your clothes are about as good as mine. There isn't a hole in them."

"Winter is coming on, and I want some thicker clothes than these to wear. It wouldn't look well for me to go around wearing summer clothes, for some of the boys might ask me what I had been doing all the season."

The lawyer laughed loudly. It wouldn't be hard work to tell what Joe had been doing all summer. He was right where he could borrow money of his wife when he needed it.

"Well, I want you to understand that I can't get any money for you," said Mr. Gib-

bons. "You see, I didn't know anything about this pearl until you told me just now, consequently I had no hand in putting the money in the bank. You will have to go to the president and see what he has got to say about it; though, to tell you the truth, it won't do you any good."

"Oh, the president is a worse man than you are," said Joe, in consternation. "I wouldn't go to him."

"That's the only thing you can do. You see, they don't know that the money belongs to Hank any more than I do. It is there to Bob's credit, and Bob is the only one who can get it. I don't see any other way for it but for you to go to work."

"I can't. The wound in my side bothers me so that I don't know what my name is."

"Well, then, there's the poor-house; you can go to that by getting a commission—"

"Poor-house! Not much I won't go there."

"I think myself that you will be safer in trusting to your wife. They are pretty strict in the poor-house."

“You just bet your life that I ain’t a-going there,” said Joe, confidently. “But can’t I get none of this money?”

“Not out of me, you can’t.”

“Why, I thought, as Bob’s lawyer, you would have something to do with it.”

“Well, I can’t help you there. When Bob comes home, which will be in the course of a few months, then it will be easy for you—Halloo! What’s the matter?”

“I don’t see why you always stick to that,” said Joe, impatiently.

“Stick to what?” asked the lawyer, a dim suspicion being awakened in his mind.

“About Bob’s coming back. He’ll be miles under the sea before the time comes for him to come back.”

“Why of course he’s coming back,” said the lawyer. “Haven’t you heard about his deserting at Cape Town? Well, he has, and he’ll be at home as quick as a clipper-ship can bring him. Don’t go.”

“I must. If you can’t get any of that money for me there’s no use of my staying here.”

"Come to think of it," replied the lawyer, "I wouldn't advise you to go near the president. He might ask you what has become of Bob, you know."

"Why, human natur'! I don't know what has become of Bob," returned Joe, opening his eyes and trying hard to look surprised, but all he succeeded in doing was to call guilt to his face plainly enough.

"I know you don't; but you will remember that the J. W. Smart sailed from this port the morning after Bob disappeared. You recall that, don't you?"

"Well, I must be going. I am sorry you can't give me any money."

"So am I, but you see I can't do it. Keep away from the president; that's all you have got to do."

Joe closed the door and went out, and the lawyer resumed his old position, with his feet upon the desk; but this time he did not have that legal document in his hand.

"That man has been up to something, and I know it," said Mr. Gibbons. "The poor, foolish fellow don't know enough about geog-

raphy to know that Bob hasn't had time to reach Cape Town yet, being only one day at sea; but, to my mind, he's had a hand in sending him off. Now, what's to be done? Of course he must have got something for it, and I'll just watch him and see about the money he spends. That will be rough on Hank, won't it? Well, he knew he was running the risk of States prison when he tried it, and I don't know that he has anybody to blame but himself."

Joe Lufkin walked away from the lawyer's office like one in a dream. He did not dare to lift his eyes to meet the gaze of anybody who passed him on the streets, and consequently he did not see his son Hank, who, by dodging around the nearest corner, hid himself in a doorway until his father had passed out of sight. Then he came out and hurried toward Mr. Gibbons's office, and he was pretty nearly out of breath when he got there. The lawyer hadn't got done thinking about Joe when the door opened to admit Hank.

"Halloo, Hank!" exclaimed Mr. Gibbons.

"I was just wondering what had become of you."

"Has father been here?" asked Hank.

"Well, yes, he has been here."

"What did he want of you? Did he ask you to draw some of that money for him?"

"Hank, that was about the sharpest trick you ever did," said Mr. Gibbons, laughing outright. "Yes, he wanted me to draw some of it for him; but I told him I couldn't do it. The money is all in Bob's hands, and there it will have to remain until Bob comes back."

"I am glad to hear you say that," said Hank, who was immensely relieved. "You see, mother and I got to wondering how in the world he could have found it out, and it occurred to me that, you being Bob's lawyer, he would come to see you about it; so I came down. He can't get any of it, can he?"

"I don't know of any way in which he can. The authorities at the bank don't know that you are in any way interested in that money. By the way, how did you happen to find that pearl?"

Hank explained in a few words, adding

that Houston was in the store at the time Bob called upon Mr. Vollar, and had heard all that passed between them.

"I believe that Houston is at the bottom of this," said Hank. "He told me this morning, while I was going after you, that there was something he wanted to tell me about this pearl, and when I came back I went to see what it was. I supposed that Mr. Vollar had paid me more than the pearl was worth, and I wanted to give it back; but I could see that the jeweller was very angry at Houston."

"Whew!" whistled Mr. Gibbons. "Hank, you are in a scrape all around."

"That's what I think. I gave the money to Bob Nellis to put in the bank, and no one but Leon Sprague and Ben Watson knew a thing about it; but now I find that father's got hold of it."

"Did you intend to go to that stream and gather some more pearls?" asked the lawyer.

"Yes. That's what I intended to do."

"And nobody knows where it is?"

"Not a living soul. I should have had things all my own way."

“Well, Hank, you can rest easy. When you go home you can tell your mother that your father can’t get the money, that you are the only one who knows where that stream is, and that I hope you will gather pearls enough to make you as rich as Captain Nellis was. You said that the money will have to remain in Bob’s hands till he comes back. When do you expect him?”

“It may be months, for it takes a sailing vessel a long time to go anywhere, but he’s coming,” replied Hank, as if he felt that to-morrow would be the time when he could take Bob by the hand. “And I shouldn’t be surprised if he had his father with him.”

“That’s just what I think,” replied the lawyer, as Hank arose to his feet. “But I don’t see how he is going to find his father aboard another vessel.”

“Stranger things than that have happened in the world,” replied Hank. “The Pacific Ocean is mighty big, and there’s a heap of islands scattered around through it, but somehow I am certain that they are going to come

back. Now, you just see what sort of a prophet I am."

"I hope your prediction will turn out true," muttered the lawyer as Hank closed the door and hastened down stairs. "But won't they raise things if they do come back? Joe Lufkin, it's my opinion that you will have to dig out."

Hank went away from Mr. Gibbons's office feeling very unlike his father, who went away from there but a short time before. It is true that he was at his rope's end. He would begin now, just where he was before he found that pearl to give into Bob's hands, but he didn't care for that. He had always made a living, and as long as he kept his health he trusted to be able to do so.

"Mother will have to go to work again, and that's what I am troubled about. But there is one thing, father isn't going to get the money," said Hank, as he trudged along. "I've got my nerve up, and I am going to wait and see what he will have to say to me when I get back."

But that was one thing he need not have

troubled his head about. His father sat in his accustomed place, pipe agoing, but he was so deeply interested in other matters that he never moved out of the way when Hank entered the house. The question that occupied the whole of his mind was, How much did Mr. Gibbons know about him? Did he know he had knocked Bob down and sent him off to sea? He did not know where Cape Town was.

"Hank," said he, arousing himself by an effort, "whereabouts in the world is Cape Town?"

"It is a long way from here—as much as three or four thousand miles, probably."

"Oh, pshaw! Then that old Gibbons has been fooling me," he added mentally. Then aloud he said: "Then Bob will have plenty of time to fall overboard before he reaches there."

"Why, of course he will. But Bob isn't the kind to fall overboard. He's coming back as sure as you live."

"That's neither here nor there. Mebbe he'll come back, and mebbe he won't," said Joe to himself. "But there is one thing

about it: Houston isn't going to get half the pearls I make. Where is that stream you found the pearls on, Hank?"

"It is up the country a piece, and I am going to keep it to myself."

Joe went on with his smoking, but to himself he added:

"I'll bet that about the time you get there looking for more pearls I will be close at your heels. You needn't think that because you have money I am going to have none. So Bob hasn't got to Cape Town yet. Then I can rest easy on what money I have got."

Joe didn't go to bed at all that night, but lay on the lounge, as he had done the night before. Hank was up before the sun, but this time he didn't have anything to say to his father about being sick. He ate his breakfast without saying much, and then put off, nobody knew where, and Hank was left to talk to his mother.

"Now, you have got to begin your washing again," said he. "That's what worries me."

"Never mind," said his mother. "You think that Bob will come back some time, and

then the money will be of just as much use to us as though we had it now."

"If I could just find one more pearl I would be satisfied," replied Hank. "But I am almost afraid there isn't any more. Here's that Houston. Mother, I know he is the man that told father of it. He is the only one who overheard what Mr. Vollar said to Bob." And with the words he appeared at the door to hear what Houston had to say, for the man leaned upon the gate as if he was afraid to venture in.

"Good-morning," said Sam. "Is Mr. Lufkin about?"

"No, sir. He went away bright and early this morning, and nobody knows where he has gone."

Mr. Houston seemed surprised to hear it. He looked up and down the street, and finally moved away without saying another word. It was evident that he would have to hunt for the pearl-mine himself, for the sum he had received from Mr. Vollar wasn't going to last him always. He started back toward the village, and ran onto Joe Lufkin almost before he

knew it. He seized Joe by the lapel of his coat and pulled him into a doorway out of sight. He knew that people would think it strange of him to be seen talking to such a man.

"Look here, Joe, what made you go off and leave me so suddenly this morning?" said Sam. "Have you been to see Gibbons about that money?"

"Yes, I have; and I won't go there again, I bet you. He talked to me as though I knew where Bob Nellis was. And he can't give me any money, either."

"What did I tell you? Now, the next best thing you can do is to call upon the president of the bank."

"And I won't go there, either. He says if I can't get along any other way I can go to the poor-house."

"Well, then, that thing is up stump, and there's nothing left but for you and me to go and hunt up that pearl-stream. I'll start with you now, if you want to."

"I ain't a-going to hunt up any pearl streams," returned Joe. "I was up to a stream this morning before you was up, and

I couldn't see no signs of any pearls. You can go and hunt them up if you have a mind to, but I'll stay right here."

"Going to give it up, are you?" said Sam, in great disgust. "You had rather be here, dependent on your wife, than to go and hunt up some more for yourself."

"I know what I am doing, and if you don't just like my style you can go elsewhere," returned Joe, defiantly. "All the pearls you get up there you can stick in your eye."

Joe turned about and left him in the doorway, and Sam, after gazing at him a moment or two, turned and went, too, but in a different direction. There was nothing left for him now but to examine the streams for himself, and this he determined to do before he had eaten another meal at his boarding-house. He went, and in less than half an hour after he reached the first stream he wished that he was safe back in Mr. Vollar's. Of all the cluttered-up streams that he ever saw that was the worst. There was no beach at all upon which he could prosecute his search, but every foot of the way seemed obstructed by logs and

drift-wood. But Sam was persevering, and when night came he was ten miles from home and as hungry as a wolf.

"Hank never found any pearls in this stream," said Sam, as he worked his way through the brush toward the road. "It must have been on some other one. Never mind. There's more than one day coming, and I'll find that stream yet. I am glad it is dark," he muttered, looking down at his shoes and clothes, "for I should be ashamed to be seen going about the streets in this way. I wouldn't feel so bad if I knew I had a stone worth two hundred dollars in my pocket."

To make a long story short, Sam Houston worked two weeks in this way, and never once found a pearl or the sight of one. His landlady looked surprised when he came home with his clothes all spattered with mud, and a little more surprised when his week's board became due and he said not a word about paying it. In the meantime his shoes were giving out—he had but one pair—and he did not know where he was going to get any more. He was getting pretty near desperate, and he

even thought of running away ; but he soon concluded that that wouldn't do, for where was he going to run to ? The small sum he received from the jeweller had been spent long ago, and it didn't do him any good, for it all went for cigars. Finally, after passing an almost sleepless night upon his bed, he got up at daylight and went down to the store, and there he found Mr. Vollar in the act of sweeping out. The latter had not seen him for some time, and he was astonished at his appearance.

"Halloo, Sam !" he exclaimed, as soon as he had somewhat recovered himself. "How goes the pearl business ?"

"I want you to take me back," said Sam, almost ready to cry. "The pearl business don't go at all. I don't believe there is any such thing out there."

"Give it up as a bad job, have you ? Well, Sam, I have been expecting this—you see I haven't got anybody to take your place—and I will take you back on one condition : That you will mind your own business in future."

"I'll do it," said Sam. "Nobody shall

ever have occasion to complain of me from this time on."

"I will advance you enough to pay your board and furnish you with new clothes, and you can go right along here as though you had been on a vacation. But mind you, Sam, no dipping into my business."

And so it was settled that Sam got a new outfit, and when he went home to breakfast that morning he was dressed in a new suit of clothes and paid his landlady the two weeks' board that was due her. She never knew that anything was wrong, for Mr. Vollar had solemnly kept his promise.

"I am all right," said Sam, as he hung his hat up on its old nail and gazed after his employer, who had just gone out to his meal. "I don't care if some one finds a gold-mine up there, Sam Houston will have no hand in looking for it. I'll stay right here and take my six dollars a week. I hope that everybody will come out as slick as I did—all except Joe Lufkin. I shall always think hard of him."

Those two weeks that Sam Houston had devoted to finding the pearls were enough to

bring everybody back to their old, legitimate way of living; and so it run along for the nine months that Bob was absent from Clifton. No one heard a word from him, and almost everybody thought he was dead—all except Mr. Gibbons and Hank. They believed that he would come back. The lawyer kept close watch of Joe to see how much money he spent, but Joe was very sly about it. If Joe wanted a shirt or some tobacco, he took from his buried bundle just the sum he wanted, and no more, and Mr. Gibbons supposed he was drawing on his wife. Leon Sprague went to school and completed his course there, and went to college; but it was a very different school from what it was when Bob was there. All the boys had heard what had become of Bob, and wondered if they were ever going to see him again. Gus Layton did not go back to the academy, for the “benefit” the boys had given him the last afternoon he passed there still rung in his ears. He stayed at home with his father, and as he had no one to associate with, the life he led there was monotonous in the extreme. He kept away

from Sam Houston, for he didn't want to hear anything more about that codicil. His father had told him that he had not touched the will, and that was all Gus cared to know about it. Mr. Layton bought him a pair of high-stepping horses, which were far ahead of the ponies he had lost, but no one seemed to care a cent for him when he went out riding. Mr. Jones had kindly offered to keep the ponies for a year, Mr. Gibbons paying their board in the meantime, and if, at the end of that time, Bob did not make his appearance, then something else was to be done with them. Hank Lufkin was in a hard row of stumps, indeed; but then it was no worse than he had been in before. After a while he renewed his efforts to find more pearls, but at last he was impelled to give it up. Not a single pearl did he find. Mr. Vollar called him into the store and divided fifty dollars with him, and Hank put that where he knew it would be safe.

Things went on in this way until one bright spring morning there came a telegram to Mr. Curtis, the president of the bank. It was from San Francisco, and read as follows:

"I will be with you next week. That codicil is a fraud. Don't let Luther Layton have any more money on my account. Let him and Joseph Lufkin know about it, but don't attempt to arrest them if they try to leave the village."

Mr. Curtis was wild with excitement. He sent at once for his cashier, and showed him the telegram.

"I really wish they had been more explicit," said he. "It is signed by Robert Nellis, but it doesn't say whether he's the old man or the boy. At any rate, you will let Luther Layton have no more funds. He will be down here some time to-day, for he wants money to pay his hands with, and you tell him that I want to see him."

Gus Layton came just before the hour of closing up, and presented a check for one hundred dollars. The cashier looked at it a moment, and then remarked that Mr. Curtis wanted to see his father.

"He is sick," answered Gus. "He has not been out of the house for several weeks."

"Well, I guess you will do. Step back in

his private room. He will have something to say to you before I cash this check."

Lost in wonder, Gus turned toward the room in which the president was occupied, and when he came out again he looked very unlike the boy who had gone in there a few moments before. He felt faint. The president had shown him the telegram, and, furthermore, it spoke about not arresting his father if he attempted to leave the village. That proved that his father had been guilty of a violation of the law. Hardly knowing what he did, he made his way home, blundered into the library, where his father was, and threw himself into the nearest chair.

"There's your check, father," said Gus, "and you can't have any more money. A telegram has come from San Francisco this morning, and it says the will is a fraud. You may not have touched the will, but you touched the codicil."

Mr. Layton settled back in his chair and covered his face with his hands. It was all out on him now.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CONCLUSION.

NEVER was there greater consternation exhibited by a lot of mutineers than was shown by the seven men on board the *Boston* when Captain Nellis set his foot upon the quarter-deck. He hadn't waited to receive any greeting at all from the men who had released him, but pushing them roughly aside sprang up the stairs that led to the place where he could breathe the air of freedom. But when he got to the deck he stopped. He gazed about him with an irresolute air, and then seeing Bob, who had worked his way around him to get an opportunity to look in his face, he stretched out his hands toward him; but before he could utter a sound he reeled and fell senseless to the deck. Bob jumped to his rescue at once, raised his head and placed it upon his knee, while the tears he could not repress coursed down his cheeks.

"What's to be done now?" he asked, looking up in the second mate's face.

"I don't know the first thing about navigation here," replied the officer. "Can you take the vessel out?"

"No, I cannot," replied Bob. "I never was at sea before in my life."

"Then we've got to wait for the captain; that's all there is about it. Catch hold of him, Ben, and we'll take him down and put him in his bunk."

Only those who have engaged in mutiny on board a ship can tell what the feelings of those men were as they stood there on deck and saw the man on whom they had depended to navigate the vessel carried below. The captain knew that something had been going on, for he and his first officer were standing up in their boats looking at the ship. She hadn't yet slipped her anchor, but she was all ready to do it when Captain Nellis came up to take command. When the captain had been laid away in his bunk the second mate came on deck again and took his stand by the rail.

"Don't look so despondent over it," said

he, addressing himself to the mutineers. "There are seven men of us, and we can make a lively fight if he forces it upon us. I will do the talking."

By this time it became evident that the captain was coming back. He came up in a few minutes, and the second mate and Ben passed the man-ropes down to him so that he could easily climb aboard.

"What's the meaning of all this?" he asked, gazing around him with flashing eyes. "Have you been trying to get up a mutiny?"

"It means, sir, that we have had Captain Nellis out of his state-room and had him up here to command the vessel; but he is as crazy as a loon," said the second mate. "This here young man is a son of his."

"This young man here?" said the captain, with a start of surprise. "Turn to, all hands, and run up the boats. Bob, if you will go below and attend to your father, I will be down there and explain everything. Now, where do you want me to go?"

"To San Francisco," said Bob. "That's the nearest port there is around here, and I

know if I could once get him there he would be taken care of."

"All right. Now, men, as soon as we get the ship under way I will make everything clear to you. Turn to and do your duty."

Bob was dumfounded with this captain's way of dealing with a mutiny. It was all over in two minutes. The men turned to with alacrity, and Bob, seeing them all at work, bent his steps to the cabin to wait upon his father. But he found that there was little waiting to be done. Captain Nellis lay upon his bunk in a deep stupor, and his face was so pale and his breath came at such long intervals that Bob began to think him past such medicines as he had at hand. The only thing he could do was to get the captain's pitcher of water and bathe his face with it. For a long time he kept water upon his face, and then the captain stirred in his stupor, opened his eyes, and looked at Bob.

"It's all right, Bob," said he, and the boy could hardly repress a cry of joy when he heard himself addressed in these familiar words. "This ship is still on an even keel."

“Oh, father, have you come back to me?” asked Bob, and he was so nearly overcome that it was all he could do to keep from laying his head beside his father’s and going off in a burst of tears.

“Eh?” said the captain.

“Oh, yes, this ship will take you where you want to go,” said Bob. He did not dare to say any more, for fear that he would say too much.

“Well, you are here now and I will go to sleep,” said the captain. “Be sure and waken me up when we touch Clifton.”

So saying the captain turned over, and he put as much strength into the manœuver as a well man could, and composed himself to sleep. Bob was electrified. He did not know what to do about it. He wished that Ben Watson would come down, so that he could tell him that his father had come to in his right mind and that he had spoken to him, but while he was thinking about it the captain came down.

“Bob, this is the first time I have met you, and I am glad to see you here,” said the offi-

cer, extending his hand. "You look better. Has something happened?"

"Yes, sir," said Bob, joyfully. "My father has come to and has spoken my name."

"That's what I thought he would do," said the captain, and his joy was almost as boundless as Bob's. "He hasn't slept any to speak of since he has been aboard the ship."

"Now, I want to know what made you bring him away out here when you knew he was crazy," said Bob. "You picked him up ten miles out at sea."

The captain's story was a short one, and he told it in a way that convinced Bob of its truthfulness. When he picked Captain Nellis up at sea he didn't know that he was the owner of the ship in which he sailed. The storm was so great that for three or four days he had to be on deck most of the time, and the captain, being insensible when brought aboard, was put into a bunk in the fore-castle. When the storm began to abate some of the fore-castle hands began telling him what the castaway said, and then he went down and looked at him.

“I never was more surprised in my life than I was when I found that I had Captain Nellis aboard,” said the captain. “Of course, I had him carried back to my state-room, but I was too far gone on my voyage to take him back. I thought I would put him off at the Azores, and write somebody at home where they could find him ; but when I came up there I found that they had no place for him.”

The captain then went on to say that he was put to his wits' end to know what to do with the man, for he began to grow unruly and to talk about coming on deck to take charge of the vessel, so he had to confine him in a state-room. He next decided upon an asylum at Cape Town, but when he got there he found that the insane patients were so meanly treated that he couldn't bear the thought of leaving him there alone, and so he took him to sea again, hoping that the fresh air and some medicine which he had received from a doctor at Cape Town would do for him what the asylum might do if had been allowed to remain there. But nothing seemed to benefit the captain.

“Your men knew that you had him on board?” said Bob.

“Yes, and they thought I was to blame for all of it. The threats have come to my ears that if I didn’t let him out they would take the ship. But mercy knows I was doing the best I could for him. I intended as soon as I got my cargo here to put for home. I was afraid the crazy man might die on my hands. Now you have my story. The men are not entirely satisfied with it, and you will help me and make the voyage smoother if you go amongst them.”

“I will do it,” said Bob. “You are certain you do not intend to take any revenge on them for their mutiny?”

“Oh, no. I saw through it all, and I knew that the thing could be easily settled. Perhaps you had better speak to them about that. The mutineers are gaining others as fast as they can talk to them.”

“I would like to have Ben Watson sent down here to relieve me,” said Bob. “Somebody ought to be with father the whole time.”

The captain replied that he would go him-

self. He got upon his feet and went on deck, and in a few minutes old Ben came down. He was very much distressed for his captain, and he wanted to have a good look at him before he said a word to Bob.

"He came to himself, and pronounced my name all right," said Bob. "You must be careful what you say to him when he awakes. He thinks he is a few miles from Clifton."

"Say," said Ben, who was overjoyed to hear this; "you didn't think you would see your father this trip, did you?"

"No, nor you didn't think so, either. You made that up just to have something to say. But, Ben, how do the men feel in regard to the mutiny?"

"Well, we have brought all of them to our way of thinking," replied Ben. "They say that if the captain doesn't take the ship to San Francisco they will take it themselves, and put the first mate in command."

"That will never do. I must go up and talk to them. There is not one captain in a hundred who would deal with a mutiny in the way this captain did. He would have shot

some of us down and had the rest in double-irons."

Bob took just one look at his father and then went on deck and mingled with the men. As fast as he could get three or four around him he talked to them, and the consequence was that in less than half an hour he brought all the sailors to side with him. They believed that the ship was going to San Francisco, and with that they were satisfied.

Things went on in this way for thirty-six hours, and still the captain slept. Bob was attending to him when the captain awoke. He did not know it at once, for his gaze was fastened upon another part of the cabin; but when he turned to look at his father his eyes were opened, and a smile of intelligence overspread his face. The long, refreshing sleep he had enjoyed, together with the medicine the doctor at Cape Town had given him, worked wonders in his case.

"Bob, how are you?" asked the captain, and his hand came out; but it was pale and emaciated, and it shook considerably.

"Oh, father!" exclaimed Bob, with tears

of gratitude in his eyes. "You have come to yourself all right, haven't you?"

"Oh, yes, I am all right," said the captain. "But it is a wonder that storm was not the death of me. How far are we away from Clifton?"

"We are quite a little distance from there yet," said Bob. "Now, father, you mustn't talk any more. You may keep still and think all you have a mind to."

"I know, but that does not hit my case," said the captain, with a smile. "I seem to think that something has been going on here—something which feels to me like a dream. I think that I am in foreign parts, and that I have got a long ways to sail in order to get home."

"That's the result of that storm you were out in. But you mustn't think anything more about it. I am here with you, and you are perfectly safe."

"Oh, I know I am safe. But what ship is this?"

"It is the Boston."

"And Captain Morris is in command?"

That's all right. Go and tell the captain I want to see him."

Bob knew by the way the words were uttered that it was intended for a command, and he lost no time in going on deck. He found the captain planking the weather side, keeping a sharp eye on the sails, and to him Bob carried his news with a face that was beaming with pleasure. He told him that Captain Nellis believed he was in foreign parts, and that he had a long distance to sail before he could reach home, and cautioned the captain to be careful what he said. Captain Morris went down and held a long interview with the owner of the vessel, but Bob thought, from the expression of his eyes, that he was suspicious. However, he said nothing until afternoon, when Bob lay down to sleep and old Ben Watson came in to wait on him. Then he straightened up in his bed and told Ben to shut the door.

"I don't mean the door of this state-room, for that has been of but little use since you fellows used an axe on it to get me out," said the captain. "I want you to shut the door

of the cabin, so that our voices will not be heard by those on deck."

"But, Captain," began Ben.

"Shut the door!" said Mr. Nellis. "Now," he added, when Ben reluctantly complied, "I want you to go to work and tell me everything that has happened since I came aboard this ship. You are not like Bob, who thinks I can't stand it. Go on, now."

Ben, who didn't know how to refuse an order, drew a long breath, and began and told the captain everything that had transpired since that memorable day when he went out duck-hunting in his boat. He told him that he was picked up ten miles out at sea, that he was insensible when he was brought aboard, and that he had been out of his head all that time since. Then he came to Bob Nellis's going home, and told how Mr. Layton had informed him that a codicil had been added to his father's will which left him his ponies and sailboat; and when he got that far Captain Nellis doubled his fist up and his face expressed the utmost anger.

"My will had no codicil!" said he. "Lay-

ton made it up himself. The only time that I can think of when Layton could have made up that clause to my will was when he found that this ship had picked me up and carried me out to sea. Then he went to my room, got the will, and added the codicil. Oh, the ingratitude of man! And so he took it all, did he? I should think, from the way I treated that boy of his, that he might have been a little easier on Bob. Well, go on."

"I think, Capt'n," began Ben, who judged that he had said enough, "that we had better quit. Bob will tell you the rest."

"Go on!" said the captain. "There's more happened after that. How did you and Bob come here? That boy promised me that he wouldn't go to sea, no matter what happened."

Ben didn't have so much compunction of conscience in going on with the rest of his story. He told how Joe Lufkin had knocked him down and taken him on board the J. W. Smart; and the worst of it was, he didn't mention Barlow's name at all. He laid it all to Joe. When the next morning came and

he woke up with a splitting headache, he was surprised to find Bob there also. They had deserted the *Smart* on some island, and had there found an English trader, with a crew of Malays; but the drunken captain forgot himself and brought on a mutiny, and Bob and the darky and himself had been put into a small boat and happened by chance to run onto the island where the *Boston* was moored.

"Yes, I remember that, and it was the first glimpse of reason I had," said Captain Nellis. "Ben, I am surprised at you. You stand still and let a man like Joe Lufkin knock you down!"

"The matter ain't settled yet," said Ben, baring his brawny arms. "You just wait until I get Joe ashore, and see if I don't pound the daylights out of him!"

"That may all be, but I don't think you will catch him ashore. Now, Ben, bring me my clothes."

"Oh, what will Bob say to me?" faltered Ben, amazed at the proposition. "He is going to kill me now for telling you this story."

“Bob won’t say anything while I am around. Bring me my clothes.”

Ben brought the clothes, and with sundry protests proceeded to help his captain dress. He watched him while he washed his hands and face and brushed his hair, and when his toilet was completed he felt a thrill of pride when he looked at him. It was his old commander, sure enough.

“Now, Ben, I want you to go ahead of me with a chair and place it where I can see everything that is going on,” said the captain. “I haven’t forgotten that I used to command this vessel once myself.”

Great was the astonishment on the deck of the Boston when Captain Nellis appeared. He shook hands with all the officers, and finally turned to Sweet, whom he greeted cordially.

“Captain, I don’t want to interfere with your business at all—I am not here for that purpose; but don’t you think you can get studding-sails on her and make her go through the water a little livelier?” said Captain Nellis. “There’s a heap of money depending on this.”

The captain gave the order, and in an instant the men were at work, and the captain sat there and watched them, as he had done when he had charge of the ship. The invigorating air brought the flush of health to his cheeks, and it was not very long before he left his chair and began pacing the deck with Captain Morris. He stayed there until Bob had his sleep out and came upon deck. To say he was surprised would not half express his feelings; but he ordered the captain down below after he had been there awhile, and his father was ready to comply with his demands. After that the captain was on deck nearly every day, and at last, to his immense relief, the headlights of the entrance of the Golden Gate appeared in sight. It was two days before they came to anchor, and then Bob posted off with that telegram which was to create such an uproar in the village.

The next day his father went ashore to visit some of the merchants with whom he had done business, for it will be remembered that he had no money. The merchants were all very glad to see him, listened with amazement

when he told his story, and freely offered the funds he needed to take him home. They offered to take him as a guest, for Captain Nellis had been pretty well known when he did business on the water ; but he remembered how long he had been absent from home, and said that his affairs demanded his attention immediately ; so the next train that steamed away from San Francisco took Bob and his father with it. Ben Watson went, too ; nor must we forget the sailor, Sweet, and the old "doctor," who brought him his food when he was confined in his state-room.

"I don't know what has become of my cook," said Captain Nellis. "He has probably gone to sea, as I wasn't there to look out for him, and I may never set eyes on him again ; but I shall want some skouse and dough-boy, and I don't know anybody who can fix them up better than the doctor. I guess I had better take him with me."

The journey to Baltimore was made without trouble, and then they boarded the little steamer Abbie, which was to land them at the watering-place.

"There is Mr. Gibbons, Mr. Jones, Mr. Curtis, the president of the bank—in fact, everybody is there to welcome us," said Bob, as he stood regarding the crowd on the wharf through his father's binoculars. "But who is that fellow in a blue uniform? I don't know him, but he must know some of us, for he is constantly waving his handkerchief."

Bob gave his binoculars up to Ben Watson, ran down the stairs, and took his stand beside the men who were getting ready to shove the gang-plank out. As soon as he saw that he could clear the space that intervened between the boat and the dock he gave a tremendous jump, and landed fairly in the arms of Mr. Gibbons. He spent a few minutes in talking to him, and then turned to the boy in blue, whom he found out to be Hank Lufkin.

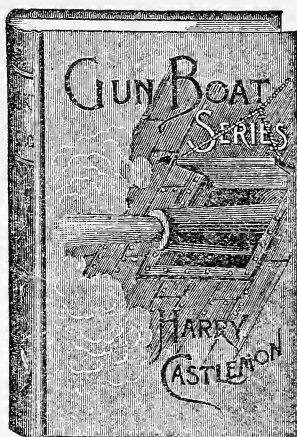
"Why, Hank, how is this?" said he, setting down the boy after he had picked him up and whirled him around two or three times. "You must have been having luck since I have been away."

Hank made some reply—we shall tell all about it in the concluding volume of this

series—and then conducted Bob to the place where lay a ten ton cutter, which he said belonged to him. Bob was astonished, but he and his party got in and rode home with Hank. He was still more amazed at some other things Hank had to tell him. Mr. Layton and all their other enemies had disappeared, and they had nothing to do but to enjoy themselves in the old way. They were glad to get home.

Joe Lufkin's piratical scheme was not dead yet; but before we tell about it we must interrupt the thread of our story long enough to tell about Leon Sprague's war record. Although he was only twenty-two years old he had passed through some rough times. It made him and his father rich, too; and what he did during the war, and how he came out of it, shall be told in *A REBELLION IN DIXIE*.

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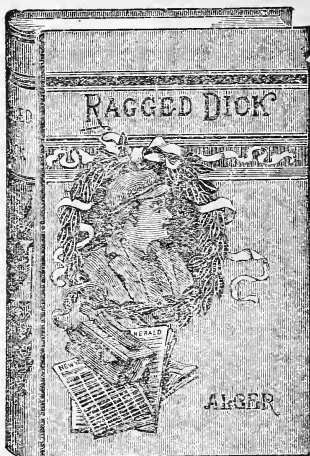
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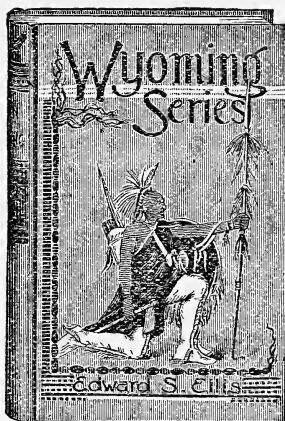
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